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Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

From “School System” to a “System of Schools”:
Race, Power, and Marketization of Urban District Governance in California

By

René Espinoza Kissell

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Tina Trujillo, Chair

Professor Janelle Scott

Professor Cristina Mora

Summer 2020

Abstract

From “School System” to a “System of Schools”:
Race, Power, and Marketization of Urban District Governance in California

by
René Espinoza Kissell

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Tina Trujillo, Chair

Urban school districts, like their broader city contexts, are defined by their diversity of people and ideas, as well as longstanding struggles to confront race and class inequality with shrinking funds for public services. Over the past three decades, districts adopted market-based strategies centered on curricular, instructional, and financial reforms, often in response to demands to improve the achievement of low-income students and students of color. In recent years, education reform efforts have shifted from community and philanthropic investment in specific school-based initiatives to restructuring the entire governance of districts. Many large districts negotiate the financial and political pressures through a policy approach called the *portfolio strategy*, which aims to expand school options for students, families, school operators, and give schools more autonomy over certain areas (e.g., hiring, curriculum) while the district coordinates enrollment and other shared systems – analogous to an investment portfolio.

As district and private sector leaders work to unify charter and traditional public schools under one governance “umbrella,” many questions emerge about the shifting power dynamics that reshape democratic engagement. For example, it is unclear whose voices, needs, and ideas are centered and why market-based reforms, like the portfolio strategy, are advocated by philanthropists, consultants, and political leaders as the natural next step, or politically inevitable, for urban districts. Scholars have traced the evolution of traditional district governance to portfolio, but as yet, we know little about how community members experience governance “redesign” in their day-to-day lives. Moreover, previous studies have not considered why some district and community leaders, rather than going the portfolio route, have chosen to maintain their improvement efforts by working within the public sphere.

This dissertation is a comparative case study of school district governance in two cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, the *portfolio governance model* in Oakland and the *public governance model* in Berkeley. Drawing on interviews, participant observations, and policy and media documents, this study explores how city politics shape the emergence of portfolio districts, and how local stakeholders navigate new partnerships through sustained coalitions called *urban regimes* (Stone, 1989). Concepts from urban regime analysis and cultural political economy frame the development of the portfolio district within a trajectory of “manufactured debt crisis” in racialized urban spaces that are rapidly gentrifying. I also leverage differences between my two case study sites, including political economic conditions, advocacy organizations, and race and class politics, to show how understandings about the purpose of schooling – and by extension the role of districts – shape

divergent strategies for improving educational equity, achievement, and funding in distinct local political contexts.

The first finding on the **local political economy** identifies the intergovernmental challenges to “fiscal vitality,” and to what extent a district can reorganize its way out of state finance inequities. California tax reform, charter laws, and audit culture shape a manufactured “urban crisis,” particularly in Oakland, which underwent a state receivership in 2003 and the subsequent proliferation of charter schools. In Berkeley, the ability to “stay in the black” during the 2008 Great Recession was a major feat, which is due to both a series of financial decisions that maintained independence for the district as well as a growing affluent population. In the second finding on **urban district governance**, I examine how crisis management is maintained and contested through local governance restructuring, where private contracting and non-profit management are increasingly justified through community engagement mechanisms. Distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district’s governance structure: Berkeley Unified leaders implemented a desegregation strategy through district-managed student attendance zones, while Oakland Unified leaders decentralized pedagogical and organizational reform at the school level through public-private partnerships. In Berkeley, the district’s pioneering desegregation efforts in 1968 are a source of pride for the self-identified progressive city, which over the years officials have had to find creative ways to continue integration efforts through other variables such as socioeconomic status and residential neighborhood. Under Oakland’s portfolio district, district and school board leaders continued to advance school closures, budget cuts, and common enrollment to keep the district “financially solvent,” echoing austerity measures that state officials implemented during the receivership. The limited community engagement practices in OUSD were replaced with symbolic community informing sessions to the frustration of many participants.

The study’s third finding on **coalitional politics** indicates that distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district’s urban regime, where government and private sector leaders took in different, and sometimes contradictory, approaches to engaging Black, Asian, and Latinx communities in district reorganization. In response to the community backlash against school closures, Oakland’s ‘portfolio regime’ comprised of district leaders and philanthropically-funded education reform advocacy organizations attempted to rebrand and refocus towards district-charter “unity” with the help of a growing network of advocacy organizations that have cultivated and politicized new district leaders. However, resistance to the portfolio idea and its power brokers is growing — at times, but not always, coordinated — which culminated in the 2019 Oakland teachers strike. In Berkeley, the absence of education reform advocacy organizations meant education leaders sought change within the district, most notably through a decade-long “collective action” strategy that brings together public institutions to close the achievement gap. However, it also fostered some complacency in regards to education reform/improvement, where there are fewer megaphones (and organizational structures) for unhappy families, overwhelmingly Black and Latinx, amidst an espoused social justice discourse.

In illustrating the democratic dimensions of district restructuring through a comparison of public and private approaches to equity-oriented goals, this dissertation study seeks to build a more comprehensive conceptualization of urban governance as ideology and negotiation through diverse perspectives beyond central office. This analysis of the rhetoric, policies, and practices around equity strategies and how they intersect with private contracting underscores how “democratic engagement” is a contentious ideal for low-income families and families of color, where their participation is often stifled in the name of “crisis” and “efficiency.” Lastly, this comparative case of urban governance illuminates the way market strategies like the portfolio strategy go beyond restructuring a district’s central office, and instead reorganize the relationship between communities and their schools.

In loving memory of my dad, Rick Kissell, who taught me the people's history and struggle of urban politics through many books, stories, and fierce solidarity. May this work continue your legacy.

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Acknowledgements

My dissertation study is the culmination of many diverse voices and ideas, including various teachers, homies, elders, and other organic intellectuals who introduced me, sometimes in unexpected ways, to critical scholarship through their own interrogations of power. My interest in education politics and district reform was inspired by my own schooling experiences in the Milwaukee Public Schools. I must thank all of the educators who fostered my passion for social justice and education, cultivated my intellectual curiosity, and affirmed my place in higher education. I realized early on that these positive experiences in disinvested schools were not the case for many friends and classmates, which spurred a research agenda on the contradictions, inequalities, and possibilities of public education.

My scholarship has only strengthened from the teachings, critique, and support of my dissertation committee. I express my deepest gratitude and appreciation for my dissertation chair and mentor, Tina Trujillo, for guiding me through the joys and challenges of writing a dissertation. Her support through research projects, teaching assistantships, and publications over the years has been pivotal to this dissertation and my development as scholar by peaking my interest in the role of school districts. Tina showed patience as I sifted through many ideas while giving firm, yet constructive criticism when my writing did not cut it. Her engaged style of mentorship meant that I could always expect thorough feedback on my work as well as a safe space to develop my own interests and arguments. Tina made it a point to make explicit the implicit rules of the academy and how to navigate them as a woman of color. I feel very lucky for this opportunity to work with her.

I am also thankful for the contributions of my other dissertation committee members. During my undergraduate studies, I read Janelle Scott's work on the racial politics of neoliberal education reform, and it gave voice to a deep frustration that grew into an intellectual curiosity. Her advising has pushed me to shift my gaze up the power structure to examine elite advocacy in education reform and to seek out the ideological underpinnings of education reform. Her consistent presence in our research group reminded me and my peers to consider the bigger questions and implications of research as well as to build confidence in sharing our work. Cristina Mora's research and course on race and ethnicity has established my sociological lens while introducing me to the interdisciplinary field of Latinx politics. She challenged me to think rigorously about my comparative research design and offered incisive questions to develop strong theoretical arguments about the role of ethnoracial identity in serving various institutional purposes and divergent political strategies.

A whole host of faculty at Cal have helped shaped my thinking, writing, and methodological skills: Dan Perlstein, Zeus Leonardo, Michael Dumas, Lisa Garcia-Bedolla, Kris Gutiérrez, Bruce Fuller, and Carolina Reid. I have been fortunate to have connected with scholars at other institutions through formal and informal mentorship, including Rand Quinn, Terri Wilson, Jeff Henig, Harvey Kantor, and Gary Anderson. Last but certainly not least, I thank Gloria Ladson-Billings, whose mentorship during my time in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program at the University of Wisconsin fundamentally shaped my analysis of race and power in education policy.

I am grateful to have found and created intellectual spaces as well as built friendships within the academy that allow me to question, disagree, and be unapologetically political. These communities include Janelle Scott's Neoliberalism and Education and Dan Perlstein's Democracy and Education research groups, UC Berkeley's McNair Scholars Program, the Labor Center, and the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues' Graduate Fellows Program led by Christine Trost,

Deborah Freedman Lustig, and David Minkus. The many dedicated dissertators in the semester writing accountability group (SWAG) have shown me that any writing craft requires discipline. The consulting staff at Berkeley's D-Lab sharpened my methodological training in a wonderful space that affirmed that it is "okay not to know."

I want to thank the amazing women in my cohort, whose kindness, sense of justice, and authenticity have helped me grow as a researcher: Elise Castillo, Laura Tobben, Frankie Ramos, and, our honorary cohort member, Liz Zumpe. I am also so grateful for the Lake Merritt Crew comprised of Rekia Jibrin, Mahasan Offutt-Chaney, Joanne Tien, Alyse Schneider, and Rachel Williams. Long writing sessions with these folks turned into longer evenings filled with wine, laughter, and blunt feedback that nourished my spirit (and scholarship). My good friend and colleague Michael Singh has been a consistent writing partner and a true compa in Graduate Students de la Raza, the UC Student-Workers Union, McNair, and many conferences and political rallies. The sisterhood of chingona scholars like Theresa Stone, Nicole Rangel, Derrika Hunt, Nicole Ramsey, and Isabel Garcia truly humanized the graduate school experience. A special thanks to the advanced students who patiently answered my many questions without judgment and provided much-needed guidance in my doctoral trajectory, particularly Laura Hernández, Becky Tarlau, and Zawadi Rucks-Ahidian. Mil gracias to Mar, Araceli, and Jacky, the mujeres who pulled my head out of the books and reminded me that "life is living" as we created many adventures throughout Oakland and beyond. And I hold a deep gratitude for Justine, Beatriz, Mirtha, and Alex for keeping me motivated and grounded, usually through good food and free rides. The people mentioned, and many more not mentioned, have taught me to be accountable to something much deeper than milestones and accolades, to center my experiences and community while considering multiple perspectives, and to accept when it is time to hit submit.

Funding from the University of California, the UC Berkeley Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, and the American Educational Research Association granted me the time and peace of mind to focus exclusively on writing my dissertation. Some of the data used in this study came from a larger research project funded by The California Endowment.

I cannot overstate the influence of various social movements on my work, particularly the mobilizations that have occurred throughout my graduate studies in the San Francisco Bay Area. The political strife and social transformation over the last seven years has sharpened my analysis of power in education and beyond. While these struggles have illuminated the urgency and complexity of societal issues, they are not inevitable, as seen through another Black Lives Matter uprising that is occurring at this very moment in my home state of Wisconsin.

I owe so much to the teachers, students, parents, community members, district and charter school administrators, advocates, labor leaders, and many other policy actors who participated in this study. This project would not have been possible without these research participants who responded to my emails and put their trust in me to share their stories – something I do not take lightly given the strong mistrust of academics among disenfranchised communities in the Bay Area. I have learned immensely from their work and reflections on their life experiences.

Lastly, words cannot express my gratitude for the love and support of my family. My parents, Anna Maria Espinoza and Rick Kissell, instilled in me a love for learning and justice through many weekends at libraries, in bookstores, and at protests. In the time spent helping my mom clean up her kindergarten classroom, I saw the dedication she gave as a veteran teacher to her students and family, and I developed a keen awareness of the weight of austerity on educators. My dad's commitment to political struggle and to uncovering the people's history fostered my desire to seek truth and social change. His intellectual imprint can be found throughout the pages of this study. My brothers, Luke and Paul, who lovingly nicknamed me "nerdy," have given me support through jokes and other much-needed distractions. The courage to pursue a doctoral degree, among

other challenges, comes from their firm belief in me. If there was a way to hang my dissertation on the fridge, my mom would do it. It took a village to get me here, especially coming from a Mexican family, y quisiera agradecerle a un montón de tíos y primos por su apoyo. I am indebted to the many sacrifices that they and my ancestors made for me to accomplish this. We did this.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The spacious and modern auditorium at the Education Complex, one of the few newly-built Oakland school district facilities, was teeming with upset and confused parents, school staff, and students waiting for their turn to make sense of the \$15 million mid-year budget cuts – or at least speak their mind about it. The community town hall hosted by three board members in November 2017 brought in at least 125 people, most of whom were White and Black community members, along with a few Latino and Asian families. Near the front sat a cluster of African American high school students and district staff.

School Board Director Shanthi Gonzales gave an overview of the event, standing below a banner that read “Dolores Huerta Hall” with the farmworker activist’s picture and “*Si se puede*” written underneath. She was interrupted by a middle-aged woman, “But that’s not what people signed up for. People didn’t come to hear a school board member speak.”

“—Yes, we will have public comments at the end,” Director Gonzales finished.

Director London then came to the front to give a detailed overview using a PowerPoint titled “The State of Our District Finances” that compared funding gaps between California and other states. “What we found from the FCMAT report is that the problems from 2003 have not really been fixed. Are most of you aware that this district was in receivership from 2003-2009?”

A resounding, “Yes” came from the audience with a unified exasperated tone. This was followed by chuckles. One woman in her thirties remarked in a matter-of-fact tone, “I think we should be [in state receivership] again. You guys aren’t doing a good job. You put us back into receivership.”

Director London, undeterred, continued, “I want to share with you what it was like being in the tail-end of receivership. How many of you were paying attention to what was going on in the school district at that time?” Half of the audience raised their hands. One Black woman in her 50s yelled, “Come on, this is Oakland!” in a tone that read ‘give us more credit than that.’ “Okay about half of you. For those of you who weren’t paying attention, I think it’s worth sharing a little bit of this history....” The audience grew restless over the next half hour. “We want to talk too! Share the mic!” A middle-aged Black man shouted out, “You just presented that we need 1.2 million for the federal reserve! You guys allowed this to happen!”

A sense of solidarity was growing among the crowd as they channeled their shared anger at the board members for the lack of opportunity to speak, and from what many viewed as the lack of accountability from the board or district staff. The crowd of parents and teachers interrupted Director Eng, chanting “Hear us out! Hear us out! Hear us out!” One woman said angrily to another woman who had been waiting to speak, “Just get up and talk!”

At last, community members got to speak into the mic, which one director refused to let go of. One white woman in her 30s with brown medium-length hair began, “I don’t have a question. I’m here to say there is no fat to trim at the schools. There is nothing extra. I am an eighth-grade teacher. I work with 30 kids every day, and I’m one of these people that work with those people you serve because kids are the number one priority. My school alone has proposed \$70,000 in cuts. There is

nothing to cut but people's positions. Counselors, specialists... Who is going to compensate for people's absences? Me and the few others that are left on our break times. I want to stay working here. I want to be an Oakland teacher. That's why I get paid very little to do this every day — but this is too much. We represent thousands of people that stress no cuts to school sites."

A Black woman with the Black Organizing Project pushed back on the growing district police budget, "They assured me that there were no new officers. So those are just raises. Also, 80 grand in salary plus benefits. *Police do not equal safety.*" A young Black man with dark-rimmed glasses followed her, "We believe in education for our people as the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense. If the school board doesn't, we will take direct action and punish the school board [a few claps from audience]. And believe me that today will mark the day in history. Because if they plan to cut the budget we will be there in thousands." The mic was dropped, literally. A self-identified parent leader approached the subject with exasperation, "I don't know why, but this has been going on for years. I think this is a bunch of malarkey. That building you guys are in on 1000 Broadway [downtown Oakland], that is a salary that could be cut. How about we let the state give us our money for our own schools and just abolish y'all altogether?" One woman screams from the back: "Get rid of the board!"

(OUSD Town Hall on Mid-Year Budget Cuts, 11/20/17)

Urban school districts, like their broader city contexts, are defined by a diversity of people and ideas, as well as the struggle to confront race and class inequality with shrinking funds for public services. Since the early 1980s, strategies to improve schools through curricular, instructional, and financial reforms have followed the pressure to improve achievement and tackling deep inequities faced by low-income students and students of color. The excerpt above, taken from my field notes, illustrates how urban school districts serve as the battleground for political mobilization that has been intensified by austerity measures. It is a snapshot of community members and district leaders grappling with the possibility of losing local control, 15 years after their first state receivership. Community engagement and disenfranchisement in the era of educational crisis and privatization has led to constrained set of policy options influenced by powerful elites and political-economic conditions — but what alternative ideas and strategies are obscured in the process?

At the local and global levels, the deregulation and privatization of public services that began in the late 1970s was a consequence of *neoliberalism*, the economic idea and practice that advances strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade through contracting out public services to the private sector (Harvey, 2007). The emergence of neoliberal economics occurred as schools were beginning to integrate, people of color were gaining more access to resources, and Black political leaders filled seats on school boards, city councils, and in mayoral offices in many cities throughout the U.S. (Anyon, 1997; Spence, 2015). Meanwhile, the goals of integration were undermined by local politicians and white flight, leaving behind a substantial economic void in cities concurrent with deindustrialization and suburbanization (Anyon, 1997; Wilson, 1990). New people of color-led political regimes, upon inheriting bankrupt cities, were soon blamed for the urban crisis, through dog-whistle racialized discourse (Haney López, 2015).

The unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity is imprinted into the geographic landscape of American education, with rural and urban school districts — and the poorest, most segregated schools in those cities — bearing most of the weight. The deep inequalities across American public schools are in large part due to a school finance system based primarily on local property taxes, which have created stark differences in per pupil funding across districts (Baker & Corcoran, 2012; Kozol, 2012). Today, many cities are undergoing demographic transformations with

gentrification processes that incentivize higher-income workers to move to urban centers as poor and working-class communities of color are pushed out, unable to afford the high rent. Consequently, families are displaced from historically Black, Latinx, and Asian neighborhoods, and this process leaves district leaders to figure out how to attract the influx of middle class and white families to their public schools as a means of increasing school revenue based on both attendance and property taxes.

The increasing private sector involvement in public education is most evident in charter school reform, independently-operated schools that are funded by public taxes with heavy investment from the foundations, private donors, and the corporate sector. This charter school network is also propped up by a growing number of advocacy organizations aiming to mobilize disenfranchised families through grassroots strategies with the financing from the venture philanthropy network. The decade between 2007 and 2017 has seen particularly rapid charter growth with three times the number of students (Lake et al., 2018). In more than 58 cities, charter schools represent approximately 20 percent of all public school enrollment (David et al., 2017). As some families choose charter schools, districts lose revenue as student enrollment decreases, creating a competitive relationship between the district and charter sectors over which kind of school can produce stronger achievement outcomes for students from historically marginalized communities, mainly low-income students and students of color. Some students and educators are strongly supportive of their charter schools, and charter leaders are particularly protective of maintaining their signature autonomy; however, many stakeholders are dealing with the unintended consequences nearly 30 years later. High turnover, limited academic gains, and draining enrollment revenue from neighboring district schools have been central to charter school policy debates and discussions at school sites (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019; Welner, 2013), but their lack of democratic governance has also caused backlash among teachers and parents (Phillips, 2019).

However, the decades-long praise and bipartisan support of charter schools has shifted in recent years. While the number of students in charter schools has grown over the last few decades, the national rate of charter growth has slowed in recent years, which peaked at six percent in 2013 then dropped to less than two percent in 2016, as well as locally where the Bay Area mirrors the downward national trend (Lake et al., 2018). Research has shown mixed results, like high turnover, limited academic gains, draining enrollment revenue from neighboring district schools, and democratic governance that is unrepresentative of the Black and Brown families they serve. But perhaps what is more influential are the Black leaders of civil rights organizations, historic and emergent, growing more forthright in identifying the problems with charter schools, with both the Movement for Black Lives and the NAACP calling for a moratorium (Rizga, 2016; Zernike, 2016). Charter teacher unionization and solidarity during the 2018-2019 “red wave” of teachers’ strikes reveal serious problems with demands on charter school teachers and staff, the vast majority do not have the same labor protections as their district counterparts. All of these dynamics are even more pressing as charter and other school choice advocacy face an image problem in the Trump/DeVos era, where left-leaning charter leaders and organizations struggle to distance themselves from outwardly conservative and unapologetically racist figures.

Public schools have served as key sites for contestation of power where Black, Asian, Latino, immigrant, and working-class parents at the margins of traditional civic engagement have resisted and redefined public education, and democracy more broadly, on their own terms. From sit-ins to save schools from closures and walk outs for more resources and culturally relevant curriculum, to sitting on local school-site councils (LSCs), school boards, and parent-teacher associations (PTAs), these democratic expressions are seen by some as the very source of school districts’ economic woes. This is most explicit in the takeover of school districts by states and municipalities, where local school boards and central office oversight are suspended. Since the first state takeover of Jersey

City schools by the state of New Jersey in 1989, more than 99 school districts have gone under state or mayoral receivership; these are overwhelmingly cities with primarily Black leadership like Newark, New Orleans, Compton, and Oakland (Morel, 2018). Hence, the democratic dimensions of local governance are framed as ‘obstacles’ to improving public schools, and these assumptions are racialized. Contracting out public services to the private sector is about more than saving money, or creating organizational efficiency, or fostering more equitable outcomes for marginalized students. Analysis of the democratic dimension of private governance and funding reveals that the strategies taken up by political actors build the capacity to shape decisions about their public schools.

Since the late 1990s, education reform efforts have shifted from community and philanthropic investment in specific school-based initiatives to gradually restructuring the entire governance of districts, following years of “district effectiveness” studies (Trujillo, 2013). Many large districts negotiate the financial and political pressures through a policy approach called the *portfolio strategy*, which aims to expand school options for students, families, school operators, and give schools more autonomy over certain areas (e.g., hiring, curriculum) while the district coordinates enrollment and other shared systems – analogous to an investment portfolio (Bulkley et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2001). Portfolio advocates attempt to unify charter and traditional public schools under one district umbrella – from competition to compromise. As the district leaders above highlight, the privatization of social services is justified not only in terms of ‘efficiency,’ the conventional aim, but increasingly advanced alongside other tenuous ideals like ‘unity’ and ‘equity.’ From Philadelphia’s Center City’s Schools Initiative to competitive school networks in New Orleans, urban districts are expected to take an entrepreneurial approach to governance in order to compete in today’s educational market (Cucchiara, 2013; Jabbar, 2015).

The research on portfolio districts is a small, but growing subfield that has identified the role of local politics in shaping portfolio strategies, maintaining that “local civic capacity” determines why the sustainability of this strategy varies from city to city (Bulkley et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2015). However, few scholars have investigated its sustainability, particularly in mid-sized districts that have quietly institutionalized this model. Nor has the literature sufficiently attended to studying other components of the portfolio strategy beyond charter schools where the private sector has been influential in redesigning central office. Further, most studies have not critically attended to the socioeconomic and racial dimensions of portfolio governance, nor the way its advocates define, or redefine, democratic engagement in contrast to past district reforms. As school districts redefine their purpose as the ‘managers’ of school options, why has the portfolio strategy become a commonsense solution for building district capacity, saving money, and creating high quality, equitable public schools? How are teachers, parents, students, and other community members with the most at stake in the constant churn of educational policies engaging in this district initiative envisioned by elite policy actors? And why have some districts opted not to implement a portfolio strategy, some going so far as instituting a moratorium on charter schools altogether?

This dissertation is a comparative case study of school district governance in two cities in the California Bay Area, the *portfolio governance model* in Oakland and the *public governance model* in Berkeley. Drawing on interviews, participant observations, and policy and media documents, this study explores how city politics shape the emergence of portfolio districts, and how local stakeholders navigate new partnerships through sustained coalitions called *urban regimes* (Stone, 1989). Concepts from urban regime analysis and cultural political economy frame the development of the portfolio district within a trajectory of “manufactured debt crisis” in racialized urban spaces that are rapidly gentrifying. I trace the evolution of central office reforms across two distinct district contexts, drawing on qualitative data through a Gramscian analysis of hegemony to illuminate coercion and consent among coalition-building efforts. The power dynamics studied in this dissertation, however, are not unique to urban districts. These nuances are best understood when analyzed within the

context of local political economic practices and city politics: gentrification, racial politics, and governance reform.

Urban Districts in Context

Gentrifying Cities

From the creation to the disinvestment to the revitalization of city centers, racialized capital is central to every iteration of urban transformation. Concurrent with the loss of capital and jobs in city centers due to deindustrialization and suburbanization, federal and state disinvestment in urban school districts post-*Brown v. Board* starved districts of resources in the 1980s and 1990s (Anyon, 1997; Wilson, 1990). White flight – a product of individual and structural racism through redlining, rezoning, and restrictive covenants – and local elected officials undermined visions of integration, leaving behind an economic void in cities (Rothstein, 2017; Self, 2005). At the local and global levels, the deregulation and privatization of public services that began in the late 1970s was a consequence of *neoliberalism*, the economic idea and practice that advances strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2007). President Reagan, one of the most influential advocates of these market-based policies, cut the budget for public housing, housing subsidies, and Section 8 in half in his first year in office (KCET, 2017). Through the federal disinvestment in social and economic urban policies, ‘Reagan-omics’ marked the creation of the entrepreneurial city where officials turned to developers to make up for lost revenue. Following the failed implementation of school integration, the emergence of neoliberal economics in the 1980s occurred as people of color were gaining more access to political capital and financial resources, and Black political leaders filled seats on school boards, city councils, and in the mayor’s office (Anyon, 1997; Spence, 2015). New people of color-led political regimes, inheriting bankrupt cities, were soon blamed for the urban crisis, through dog-whistle racialized discourse (Haney-Lopez, 2015).

The unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity is imprinted into the geographic landscape of American education, with urban school districts – and the poorest, most segregated schools in those cities – bearing most of the weight. The deep inequalities across American public schools are rooted in a school finance system based on local property taxes, which have created stark differences in per pupil funding across districts (Baker & Corcoran, 2012; Kozol, 2012). Cities in California face even more challenging constraints due to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the nation’s first and most influential tax limitation measure that drastically reduced the local property tax revenues available to schools. Despite the Bay Area being home to some of the wealthiest companies in the world (including Apple, Facebook, Google, Wells Fargo, and Chevron) and dramatic growth in real estate wealth, Prop. 13 prevents cities like Oakland from taxing corporate wealth and real estate to create more affordable housing or funding public libraries and schools (BondGraham, 2017).

Today, many cities are undergoing a demographic transformation with gentrification processes that incentivize higher-income workers to move to urban centers as poor and working-class communities of color are pushed out, unable to afford the high rents, access credit, or maintain ownership of homes held in their families for generations (Faber & Ellen, 2016; Reid et al., 2017; UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Project, 2015). Consequently, families are displaced from historically Black, Latinx, and Asian-American neighborhoods, and this leaves district leaders to figure out how to attract the influx of middle class and White families to their public schools as a means of increasing revenue. The demographic and economic changes in American cities deserve a closer look in relation to emerging public-private partnerships in urban school districts (Cucchiara, 2013).

Race and Class Politics of Democracy: A Contested Ideal and Strategy

Compared to the welfare states typical of other Western countries, the education-centered welfare state in the United States has replaced more robust social policies to address poverty and inequality (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). This liberal political economy has created a complex relationship and significance of public schooling for the most marginalized communities, historically Black and poor, whose schools have been the sites of racialized political struggles for power, resources, and representation (Todd-Breland, 2018). Related to its funding by public tax dollars, public schools are also unique to other American institutions in their level of democratic oversight and decision making, from democratically-elected boards to legally-mandated committees. These democratic mechanisms do not mean, however, that all constituents are included. Like American democracy, democratic engagement for public education has been a vehicle to create, reify, or justify discrimination as much as it has provided opportunities for oppressed communities to access power. Danielle Allen (2016) distinguishes *civic engagement* as “public action undertaken through approved venues and within the confines of long-standing public agendas” (p. 33). Yet, as Domingo Morel (2018) asserts, “decades of fights to provide black students’ equal access to public schools and equal funding for low-resourced public schools have required political struggles” (p. 12).

Coupling conceptualization of democracy with a theory of justice lends an analysis of the ‘dark side’ of citizenship as “a mechanism of state control and rule” (Guarnizo, 2012, p. 12), which is critical to understanding the complexity of democratic engagement when there is mistrust between government and disenfranchised communities. State repression, as highlighted in the police brutality protests of the last decade, is particularly critical in conceptualizing the role of race and racism in shaping democracy, citizenship, rights, and the urban commons, where spatial fragmentation and containment of low-income minorities in segregated areas has been key for political economic stability (Thompson, 2009, p. 200). Beyond *membership* and *rights*, democratic citizenship begins with political imagination and empathy. Racism has “constricted democratic imagination and empathy for non-whites, leading to limited notions of political community citizenship” throughout American history, a “white citizenship” of sorts (2009, p. 198). Thompson (2009) explains:

No modern economic system can function without government. Not government can survive for long without ‘the people.’ The tension between degrading people in the economy and uplifting people in democratic discourse is a profound challenge to governance. It is in this realm that race has proved invaluable, and also that cities have proved invaluable. Race allows for degradation of minorities, without provoking a larger legitimacy crisis of democracy. Cities allow for the spatial concentration and containment of degraded minorities. Politicians and judges have found clever ways to manage this racial/spatial tension - by targeted enforcement of drug laws, by restricting forced school busing to integrate schools, and by turning a blind eye to exploitation of immigrants in urban areas. (p. 201).

Public schools have served as key sites for contestation of power where Black, Asian, Latino, immigrant, and working-class parents at the margins of traditional civic engagement have resisted and redefined public education, and democracy more broadly, on their own terms. It is this democratic oversight that is seen as the very source of school districts’ economic woes. This is most explicit in the takeover of school districts by states and municipalities. Since the first state takeover of Jersey City schools by the state of New Jersey in 1989, more than 99 school districts have gone under state or mayoral receivership — from Newark, New Orleans, Compton, and Oakland, all of which are cities with Black and Latinx leadership. Although state officials have shown little concern

for how democratic oversight excludes working class communities in its preoccupations with district finances, the frustrations by marginalized parents provides further ammunition that something is wrong with how and why decisions are made at the local level. Hence, the democratic aspects of local governance are framed as the obstacles to improving public schools.

History of the Portfolio Strategy and Governance Restructuring

The portfolio strategy, more than the latest fad in education reform, is part of a lineage of governance restructuring, which since the 1970s has focused on contracted out public services to the private sector. In theory, the *portfolio strategy*¹ is a policy approach aimed at diversifying the governance and funding of schools through a mix of school choice mechanisms and external providers to create substantial change in districts (Bulkley et al., 2010). Since 2001, over 35 school districts have negotiated these financial and political pressures by contracting out services and management to external providers to spur educational innovation, beginning in large cities like Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Los Angeles (CRPE, 2016).

The “portfolio idea” was crafted in the early 1990s by researcher-advocates at the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE, 2016, p. 6), an independent research center now housed at the University of Washington Bothell with funding from the Gates, Walton, and Dell Foundations (CRPE, 2018). As the chief architects of the portfolio strategy, Paul T. Hill and colleagues were critical of the multitude of reform efforts from the 1980s and early 1990s that from their perspective yielded little improvement and were not sustained beyond the work of a few charismatic leaders. These experts and educational leaders decided that coordination between these different efforts was key, along with “alternative” (often private) sources of funding to build district capacity. They contend that a governance structure that oversees a combination of policies would create more financial efficiency, while improving outcomes for poor students and students of color (Hill et al., 2001). Most notably, Hill identified that the local politics shaping education needed to change, and that school boards, teachers’ unions, and central office staff as obstacles to innovation (Hill et al., 2001). Chicago’s Renaissance 2010 plan, introduced in 2004, spurred national attention when the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools Arne Duncan went on to become Secretary of Education under the Obama administration in 2008, thanks to intervention from the Teach For America network (Dillon, 2008). All of these initiatives moved forward with no evidence on the effectiveness and consequences of the portfolio model approach.

In a sense, portfolio districts have become major foundations’ latest entrepreneurial project with an enduring rationale underlying most private sector involvement—improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public governance. However, some district and school board members have taken alternative approaches. In places like Buffalo, NY and Huntington Park in Los Angeles County, school boards are calling for a full moratorium on charter schools (Kohli, 2016; Rey, 2017). “More and more of the district funding is going to charter schools,” said Barbara A. Seals Nevergold, the Buffalo School Board President who sponsored the charter resolution, “and yet, while that’s happening, we’re losing resources needed for schools in the district” (cited in Rey, 2017). The moratorium process would give school boards the authority to sign off on charter applications and recoup funds from charters whose students return to district schools.

This changing view of educational provision and funding that privileges private contracting and partnerships has redefined which stakeholders hold power and how decisions are being made. Historically, teachers’ unions, parent organizations, school boards, professional associations, universities, superintendents and central office staff have been key participants in district decision-

¹ Also known as *hybrid strategy*, *diverse provider model* or *portfolio management model*

making. Superintendents still maintain power in portfolio districts but now work more closely with mayors, national foundations, for-profit and non-profit service providers, investors, state and national advocates, and the private education industry (Henig, 2010). And while news accounts detail their influence in portfolio districts (Barnum, 2017), the scholarship has not sufficiently attended to how community members are positioned in this new policy equilibrium (see exceptions Buras, 2014; Scott & Quinn, 2014). Specifically, in considering which “local” stakeholders are engaged in redesigning a portfolio district, who or what is considered “local” and when does that authenticity matter in projects that center privatization?

Purpose and Significance of Study

This dissertation investigates how political and economic trends shape private contracting in school districts, as well as how local stakeholders transform governance, particularly in coalitions with a market-oriented vision of racial advocacy and educational equity. I explore these political dynamics through a comparative case study of school district governance in two cities in the California Bay Area. The first is the portfolio strategy in the Oakland, California and the second is Berkeley, California, a neighboring district with a public governance model. I leverage differences between my two case study sites, including the political economic conditions, types of district governance, advocacy and philanthropic investment, and race and class politics, to explain how understandings of the purpose of schooling – and by extension the role of districts – shape divergent strategies for improving educational equity, achievement, and funding in distinct local political contexts. Oakland Unified and Berkeley Unified were selected as cases that characterize distinct governance structures, where the private contracting in Oakland compared to the public-oriented initiatives in Berkeley provide rich contexts for comparison.

As district and private sector leaders work to unify charter and traditional public schools under one “umbrella,” many questions emerge about the shifting power dynamics that reshape democratic engagement. For example, it is unclear whose voices, needs, and ideas are centered and why market-based reforms, like the portfolio strategy, are advocated as the natural next step, or politically inevitable, for urban districts. Scholars have traced the evolution of traditional district governance to portfolio, but as yet, we know little about how community members experience governance “redesign” in their day-to-day lives. Moreover, previous studies have not considered why some district and community leaders, rather than going the portfolio route, have chosen to maintain their improvement efforts by working within the public sphere. The strategies to reform districts, or the fiscal and political “crises” that define urban problems, are not an inevitable economic trend nor a preordained social phenomenon. Rather, it is the result of social and political decisions made by real people who wield the power to define educational and other social problems, and consequently, shape their policy solutions. The strategies to reform districts, or the fiscal and political “crises” that define urban problems, are not an inevitable economic trend nor a preordained social phenomenon. Rather, it is the result of social and political decisions made by real people who wield the power to define educational and other social problems, and consequently, shape their policy solutions.

This dissertation study builds a comprehensive conceptualization of urban governance as ideology and negotiation through diverse perspectives beyond central office. This is done by illustrating the democratic dimensions of district restructuring through a comparison of public and private approaches to equity-oriented goals. Whereas previous research has relied on interviews with district leaders, the perspectives of diverse policy actors provides nuanced insight into how current public-private partnerships provide or constrain educational opportunities in relation to past generations of market-based reforms. My analysis of the rhetoric, policies, and practices around

equity strategies and how they intersect with market-based policies underscores how “democratic engagement” is a contentious ideal for low-income families and families of color, where their participation is often stifled in the name of “crisis” and “efficiency.” This comparison of the ways community stakeholders in two districts navigate local governance sheds light on advocacy for and resistance to district initiatives, thus illuminating the possibilities for educational equity, particularly under the serious financial challenges that urban districts face. This study of urban governance has implications for understanding how public institutions function with market mechanisms and logic at the local level, and how the study of governance is inextricably linked to power, race, and class.

Research Design and Conceptual Framework

This comparative case study of two school districts in the San Francisco Bay Area examines how city politics shape the emergence of portfolio districts, and how local stakeholders navigate new partnerships through sustained coalitions called *urban regimes*. I use urban regime analysis and cultural political economic theories to frame the relationship between local political economy and the coalition-building politics. The comparison between Oakland’s portfolio strategy and Berkeley’s public governance model illuminates how different city politics, local policy actors and stakeholders, and education reforms create distinct policy discourses and governance models within the same region (Yin, 2006, 2014). Specifically, I ask:

1. **Context: What are the political and historical factors that are associated with two urban districts’ current governance models?**
 - a. How have the politics of crisis shaped the development of these divergent strategies?
2. **District Governance: What are the characteristics of each district’s governance model, and how are their differences and/or similarities related to place-based conceptions of power and democracy?**
 - a. What are each district’s priorities, staff roles, decision making processes, funding sources, and community engagement strategies?
 - b. What does governance restructuring, or lack thereof, reveal about community members’ beliefs about the purpose of public education and ideologies of the state?
3. **Community and Elite Advocacy: What are the race and class politics of each district’s coalition-building efforts? In what ways do regimes gain and wield influence in education reform?**
 - a. What are the guiding values and goals, strategies, and networks of the stakeholders comprising each regime?
 - b. How have resistance and alternatives to marketized governance been mobilized, and by whom?

Oakland and Berkeley are not cases of a “good”/“bad” binary of education reform, but rather exemplify how local contexts create different management structures, and where state and market forces influence shared political pressures despite distinct local values and efforts.

The complexity of the district context requires a qualitative approach to illuminate its contours and trace the evolution of an increasingly popular education reform strategy. By drawing on the sensemaking of participants involved in district initiatives, we gain nuanced insight into how policy ideas get taken up locally in different ways, and how political support and resistance is shaped by stakeholders’ understanding of the problems along with the influence of elite knowledge-brokers. I draw on interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders, participant observations of education

events and district meetings, policy and media documents, and secondary quantitative analysis to describe city, district, and student demographics as well as financial affiliations.

Dissertation Roadmap

My analysis reveals how district governance serves as the political terrain where urban regimes negotiate economic conditions to maintain influence or transform the control of public schools. First, my study shows that local civic capacity shapes local leaders' dependence on public or private strategies and funding sources. Racialized debt burdening urban districts, due to funding inequities and takeover mandates from the state audit agency, opened the door for private financing and partnerships, while more affluent and stable districts were buffered from extractive relationships with venture philanthropists and state officials. Second, I find that community engagement in the redesign of central office reveals the precarious nature of democratic participation, where stakeholders walk the line between direct engagement in their school community and cooptation that manufactures consent for market-based policies or white-dominated control. Specifically, portfolio districts have further destabilized working class communities of color, which is far from advocates' claims of efficiency. Third, I argue that urban regimes are a key piece in mediating local agency amid structural constraints, demonstrating that local power brokers hold much, but not all, influence in education matters within this contested space. It is critical to examine not only the change in ideologies and political strategies between regimes, but within regimes. In an attempt to "reform the reform," the portfolio regime adapted to criticism with a new rhetoric based on "compromise" while maintaining the same mechanisms and funders. The civic regime, an understudied coalition, looked to equity-oriented reform that relied on school integration, local actors, and public capacity rather than intermediaries. However, racial justice that was fulfilled through a politics of representation and limited changes still came at the expense of students of color. Furthermore, programmatic changes alone are not enough to challenge displacement, financial disinvestment, and the concentration of power by elite actors, hence, the importance of studying the multilayered, dialectical relationship between local political economy, governance reform, and community mobilization.

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. In Chapter 2, I review the three bodies of scholarship that this study builds on, urban district reform and educational privatization, from which emerges research on portfolio districts. I consider the takeaways from the research, such as the shifting power among public and private actors, as well as the conceptual and methodological gaps in the literature, such as the lack of perspectives outside of central office and limited inquiry into why some districts have opted against implementing a portfolio model. Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical framework that complicates the portfolio strategy as a theory of action using urban regime theory and urban political economy to conceptualize how the sense of history and place in urban districts shapes its district governance. These concepts from urban political economy and urban regime theory lend us the tools to push beyond evaluating the cost effectiveness of the portfolio strategy to interrogate the assumptions behind its design and the subsequent political processes, particularly for youth of color and other marginalized communities. Chapter 4 outlines the study design, research questions, and methods. I justify the use of comparative case study design with qualitative methods to illuminate the complexities of how city politics, local policy actors and stakeholders, and education reforms create distinct policy discourses and governance models within the same region (Yin, 2006, 2014). I also describe the context of both case studies, Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), and how each municipal and educational landscape provides unique insight into understanding the layered issues that surround

governance reorganization and community struggle in education reform. I conclude with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher and how it relates to my epistemological orientation.

I then move onto three substantive chapters in which I ask three interrelated questions that span political economy, governance, and local politics. In Chapter 5, on local political economy, I identify the intergovernmental challenges to “fiscal vitality,” and to what extent a district can reorganize its way out of state finance inequities. California tax reform, charter laws, and audit culture shape a manufactured “urban crisis,” particularly in Oakland, which underwent a state receivership in 2003 and the subsequent proliferation of charter schools. In Berkeley, the ability to “stay in the black” during the Great Recession was a major feat, which is due to both a series of financial decisions that maintained independence for the district as well as the city’s higher wealth.

In Chapter 6, on urban district governance, I examine how crisis management is maintained and contested through local governance restructuring, where private contracting and non-profit management are increasingly justified through community engagement mechanisms. Distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district’s governance structure: Berkeley Unified leaders implemented a desegregation strategy through district-managed student attendance zones, while Oakland Unified leaders decentralized pedagogical and organizational reform at the school level through public-private partnerships. In Berkeley, the district’s pioneering desegregation efforts in 1968 are a source of pride for the self-identified progressive city, which over the years officials have had to find creative ways to continue integration efforts through other variables such as socioeconomic status and residential neighborhood. Under Oakland’s portfolio district, district and school board leaders continued to advance school closures, budget cuts, and common enrollment to keep the district “financially solvent,” echoing austerity measures that state officials implemented during the receivership. The limited community *engagement* practices in OUSD were replaced with symbolic community *informing* sessions to the frustration of many participants.

In Chapter 7, on race and class politics of coalitional efforts, I find that distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district’s urban regime, where government and private sector leaders took in different, and sometimes contradictory, approaches to engaging Black, Asian, and Latinx communities in district reorganization. In response to the community backlash against school closures, Oakland’s ‘portfolio regime’ comprised of district leaders and philanthropically-funded intermediary organizations attempted to rebrand and refocus towards district-charter “unity” with the help of a growing network of advocacy organizations that have cultivated and politicized new district leaders. However, resistance to the portfolio idea and its power brokers is growing — at times, but not always, coordinated — which culminated in the 2019 Oakland teachers strike. In Berkeley, the absence of education reform advocacy organizations meant education leaders sought change within the district, most notably through a decade-long “collective action” strategy that brings together public institutions to close the achievement gap. However, it also fostered some complacency in regards to education reform/improvement, where there are less megaphones (and organizational structures) for unhappy families, overwhelmingly Black and Latinx, amidst an espoused social justice discourse.

Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the implications of this study for policy, practice, and future research. Here, I conclude with an analysis of how the municipal and educational landscape in two distinct urban districts provides the context for understanding public-private partnerships, and therefore, highlighting the layered issues that surround governance restructuring and community struggle in education reform. I argue for stronger attention to the coercive aspects of generating community consent for marketization as well as the evolving politics of regimes as an emergent counter-hegemony challenges long-held neoliberal common sense.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To understand the layered landscape of school district politics in Oakland and Berkeley, I situate the portfolio strategy and other district restructuring within a legacy of attempts to reform school districts, particularly in urban schools. I trace structural analyses of urban political economy and the evolution of market-based ideas and practices in education policy, to how school district stakeholders and policy actors on the ground build power through struggle, compromise, and solidarity. Pulling together the evidence on urban crisis in relation to equity and market-based strategies of education reform, I put diverse areas of study in conversation with each other to spark the importance of bridging the state disinvestment to cross-sector privatization technologies to contextualize the coalitional politics that coalesce around a limited set of policy options.

Efforts to tackle the policy dilemmas facing city schools require a multi-level, interdisciplinary analysis. A survey of the academic literature informs this dissertation study on how the politics of city governance and finance are critical to the direction of urban district initiatives, particularly how race and class politics contour coalition-building in the local educational market. I begin with a review of the small, but growing body of research on portfolio districts and assess the insights and limitations of this burgeoning area of study. Then, I turn to three other strands of literature to deepen the study of power, politics, and democracy in local governance: urban district reform, educational privatization, and urban political economy, with special attention to how race, class, and power are addressed, if at all. I conclude with the contributions of the field as well as the theoretical and methodological gaps that this dissertation seeks to address.

The Portfolio Strategy

In response to frustrations with district “bureaucracy” school district leaders have been encouraged and pressured to restructure central office since in the late 1990s with the help of heavy philanthropic and intermediary support. Despite the increasing media attention and think tank evaluations, whose researchers often consult with the same portfolio districts they study, the academic scholarship on this initiative is limited. This provides a critical opportunity for new scholarly directions.

Think Tank Origins and Evaluations

From the mid-1990s until 2010, studies on portfolio models had been almost exclusively conducted by its chief architect, Paul T. Hill, and colleagues at the Center for Rethinking Education (CRPE). Before portfolio was conceptualized and implemented, researchers and political strategists built on previous research with urban districts to tackle common obstacles to reform. In *It Takes a City* (2001), Hill and colleagues identify six cases of cities that have “attempted fundamental education reform” (p. viii), and where city leaders can improve upon these weaknesses. Critical to this equation, they posited, is building independent institutions to create a new politics that fosters more radical, market-oriented change, such as real estate trust funds for public schools. A precursor to the portfolio strategy, the authors outline the core components of a ‘hybrid strategy’ as strong performance incentives, recruitment of teachers with “superior education” and from diverse professions, and “freedom of action” that provides flexibility for experimentation (p. viii).

This volume drew on two sets analyzing a citywide reform strategy (1997-98) and a decentralization initiative (1994-95) across multiple cities in conjunction with universities and foundations. These cases were defined and chosen based off of either a new superintendent or new civic coalition that worked to “create pressures, incentives, and investments to encourage individual

schools to reform” (2001, p. xvii). This early conception of portfolio districts also drew on seven simulations with 38 stakeholders and consultants in Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle that required working through hypothetical scenarios of local school reform strategies. The book’s title and guiding philosophy, “it takes a city to educate a child,” is based on three ideas grounded in municipal-district relations: first, school improvement is central to any urban revitalization strategy; second, youth development and anti-poverty programs are just as difficult to carry out as school improvement programs and should also undergo “cause-and-effect analysis” (p. 5) that Brookings has done for urban education; and third, school improvement strategies require a comprehensive approach that aims to broker preschool, school readiness, and health and social services through public and private resources. They theorize that these pieces will have a stronger impact on student learning through what will eventually be called a portfolio district.

This comprehensive, and ambitious, conceptualization of governance restructuring glazes over many factors. Embedded in advocates’ analyses is a skepticism of, or sometimes apathy for, local knowledge and community power: “Like a misconceived version of *High Noon* [...] the sheriff is forced to leave town because the people do not care for all that noise” (Hill et al., 2001, p. 10). In this analogy, the townspeople in the movie represent the ungrateful attitude of disgruntled community members who are resistant to new leaders. While Hill and colleagues acknowledge describes the “prejudice” families face without substantiating on structural inequality. Their analysis rarely mentions, let alone assesses, the implications of the growing private sector influence on education. Still, portfolio advocates are more nuanced than many early conservative and neoliberal policy briefs in that they highlight major equity-oriented policies: “the larger economic system constrains the future of their communities and their communities’ capacity to support decent schools” (p. 5).

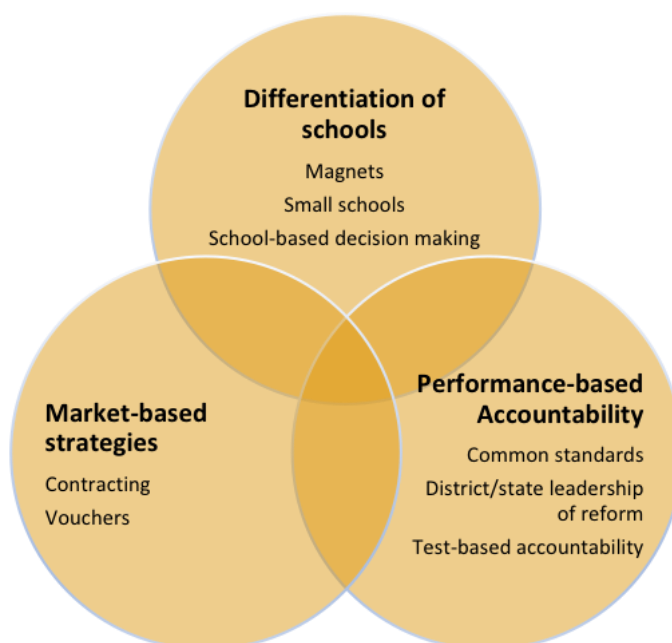
It is also interesting to note that Hill and colleagues focused on making education reform — improving social ills, if not equity — more attractive to conservatives and moderates by harkening back to these Republican figures. They point out that ESEA had Republican support in significant ways, arguing that the commitment to education “flowered with equal passion in the Republican Party” (p. 2). This signals consultants’ and advocates’ early attempts to foster bipartisan support of PMM by pushing back on the narrative that education and social responsibility is solely a Democrat-dominated concern. Moreover, they argue that cultural attitudes about those students most marginalized in public schools are an impediment to making real change. This suggests that the attitudes of principals, teachers, and policy makers have fostered a culture that is resistant to change, thus no improvement in student achievement. The authors’ critique of cultural deficit tropes among middle class and white leaders (although less explicit about race) foreshadows the multicultural neoliberal discourse of TFA and other highly-connected intermediaries. Despite lack of evidence, the model went on to become a popular reform strategy for disinvested urban, and a few suburban, districts in the twenty-first century.

Recent Studies on Portfolio Districts

Between Public and Private (Bulkley et al., 2010) is the first and only comprehensive book to date on the topic. Whereas the research conducted by Hill and colleagues is unequivocally advocating and advancing the implementation of portfolio districts, this book brings together ideologically-diverse perspectives to more thoroughly analyze how this approach is shaping education and any unintended consequences. In Figure 1, Henig conceptualizes the relationship between the three main functions of the “portfolio management model”: differentiation of schools, market-based strategies, and performance-based accountability. Case studies of Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, and New Orleans illuminate the importance of the local political context in contouring the dynamics of public-private partnerships in districts. Honig & DeArmond (2010) try

to make sense of the area that is undergoing the most drastic change: central office. Burch (2010) situates portfolio districts within federal education policies and market trends, while Reckhow (2010) explains the role of foundations in disseminating and legitimating this new approach. According to these researchers, at the time of publication, it was too soon to conclude whether portfolio districts are a success or failure due to the dearth in research, but its implementation in school districts across the country underscored the need for critical reflection, academic evaluation, and rigorous analysis (Bulkley et al., 2010).

FIGURE 1. Key Components of a Portfolio District



Source: Bulkley, K. E., Henig, J. R., Levin, H. M., & Cuban, L. (2010). *Between public and private: Politics, governance, and the new portfolio models for urban school reform*. Harvard Education Press Cambridge, MA.

The academic scholarship examines how local context mediates the relationship between portfolio districts and issues of local control, as defined by local civic and provider capacity, available resources, and issues of governance (Bulkley & Henig, 2015). With the erosion of district hegemony in the decades following *A Nation at Risk*, a new political ecology is emerging where local actors are dependent on national organizations to exert funding and influence in cities. However, while federal actors and coalitions may be driving factors in the predominance of PMM, there also exist indigenous strains and constituencies at the local level that drive the reform efforts. Bulkley and Henig argue that the amount and type of local civic capacity determines if PMM further erodes localism. Some studies are evaluations of specific districts that take into consideration the role of stakeholder politics (Christman, 2005; Marsh et al., 2013). Others conceptualize what new contracting arrangements mean for governance and power (Shipps, 2012; Wong, 2011). Drawing on case studies of two public-private collaborations in the New York City school district, DiMartino (2014) found that provider identity, formal and informal agreements, transparency, and the role of government and accountability shape the impact of public-private partnerships.

One clear conclusion from the research is that the portfolio strategy has shifted power among actors; traditional interest groups like teachers' unions lose power while foundations and

intermediary organizations gain more power. This phenomenon, however, is similar to other market-based reforms. What is distinct about the portfolio strategy is that districts are re-emerging as key institutions for policy entrepreneurs as district leaders evolve into managers of diverse contracts. Whereas advocates argue that the expansion of high-quality options for low-achieving students is a “success” (Hill et al., 2012), other scholars contend that the extrapolation of research on the constituent elements of the model is not helpful because of the complex interactions of these elements within the portfolio model (Saltman, 2010). Saltman (2010) concludes, “no evidence is found to suggest that it will produce gains in either achievement or fiscal efficiency” (p. 15).

Research Contributions and Limitations

Conceptually, many studies take for granted that districts are in the position of dealing with charter schools, and, in some sense, normalizing financial bankruptcy. There is little interrogation of why certain “solutions” become commonsense. Further, the research has not sufficiently attended to community resistance to the portfolio strategy and its component parts, like school closures. Henig (2010) contends that portfolio models are contract regimes, which are distinct from market regimes in key ways. His conceptualization of contract regimes’ core components, such as “voice” rather than “exit” (Henig, 2010, p. 32-33), diverges from my findings of Oakland’s portfolio district and its role in limiting forms of democratic participation, as I will discuss later. Moreover, theoretical analyses of structural racism as it relates to privatization are largely absent (see exceptions Lipman, 2011; Scott, 2011). Methodologically, most of the research utilizes case study design and often privileges the voices of district staff and private sector leaders as interview participants. Researchers have traced the creation and implementation of the portfolio strategy across many cities, yet few have investigated its sustainability, particularly in mid-sized districts, like Oakland, that have quietly institutionalized this model (as opposed to large districts like Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia).

Still in its early stages, the first portfolio model began in Philadelphia in 2002 and the idea was born just a few years prior by Paul T. Hill and colleagues. Similarly, the research on portfolio districts is limited in its scope and dominated by a few scholars (e.g., Bulkley et al., 2010; Bulkley & Travers, 2013; Hill, 2009; Hill et al., 1999, 2001; Shipps, 2012). There are significant gaps in the literature, such as the insufficient attention to community resistance to the portfolio strategy, the lack of perspectives outside of central office, and limited inquiry into why some districts have opted against implementing a portfolio model. Filling these gaps requires incorporating historical analyses of urban district reform along with other research that may not explicitly focus its sights on central office, yet still offers different perspectives on the district as an institutional actor. From students to billionaire philanthropists, a holistic political analysis of district reform pulls from diverse theories and methods to capture how power is shaped, lost, and gained, particularly for those at the margins of reform efforts.

Urban Political Economy

The urban political economy scholarship encompasses sociology, political theory, anthropology, and geography, thus offering a spatially nuanced understanding of the relationship between cities and districts tied by urban policy and political environment. These studies also ground my dissertation with a conceptualization of education policy through a political economic framework by addressing the material and ideological dimensions of race and class. Tracing the theoretical foundations of oppression as it relates to market-state-civil society, along with the role of education in various political struggles towards justice for marginalized communities, is critical to

better understanding the potential and limitations of policymaking in pursuit of educational equity. Moreover, this literature weaves between different scales of macro-level political economy, meso-level policy actors and institutions, and micro-level interactional dynamics to parse out the nuanced issues and ideas often overlooked in education policymaking.

How Race, Space, and Political Regimes Frame Urban Education

The neoliberal political economy is, in part, defined by the mobility of resources and capital, thus bringing renewed attention to space in the education field. Education policymaking is increasingly multi-scalar and articulated outside of nation-state boundaries, not unlike citizenship (Guarnizo, 2012; Lingard, 2007). However, as Ball (2006) points out, “policy research lacks a sense of ‘place’; either in not locating policies in any framework that extends beyond the national level, or in any accounting for or conveying a sense of the locality in the analyses of policy realization” (as cited in Gulson, 2007). No longer solely in the domain of geography, the “spatial turn” has spread to many fields, bringing with it the “spatial trialectic” of spatiality, historicity, and sociality to illustrate disinvestment in public schools and the cities in which they are embedded (Soja, 1996). Theoretical literature on “right to the city” (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996; Mitchell, 2003; Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008) in conversation with racialized space (Gilmore, 2002; Haymes, 1995; Thompson, 2009) situates public education as an arena of struggle over the constitution of urban space that takes place at multiple scales, linking local experiences to global practices (Gulson & Symes, 2007).

Right to the City

The urban policy arena provides a strategic ground for the development of citizenship because “their streets conflate identities of territory and contract with those of race, religion, class, culture, and gender to produce the reactive ingredients of both progressive and reactionary political movements” (Holston & Appadurai, 1999, p. 2). The *right to the city* is “the right to command the whole urban process” (Harvey, 2008, p. 320), where “all audacities can be premised” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 155). This right to actively shaping the city processes includes both the material aspects (products and consumable material goods) and the ideological (information, symbolism, imaginary, and play) (Lefebvre, 1996). Lefebvre’s *Writing on Cities* seeks to extend Marx’s work by linking industrialization and urbanization with a geographic lens that “radically challenges and reimagines the capitalist world order” (Purcell, 2003, p. 565) by centering on who exactly has the right to the city and control of the streets (1996, p. 17). Inhabiting a city, or the right to uses of city spaces, is a process of appropriation, thus challenging the notion of ‘property rights.’ What unites the diverse array of right to the city scholarship is a critique of urban policy for being increasingly undemocratic, excluding the poor, and creating cities that prioritize the needs of the business community and wealthy elites over the vast majority (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli, 2005). Therefore, more than a singular right, the right to the city more accurately constitutes a set of rights.

Ultimately, Harvey, among other scholars, uses the idea of the right to the city as a tool for democratizing urban space through its demands over use, construction, and design – this has particular salience for the neoliberal redefinition of the state that legitimizes market control. From a historical perspective, present-day neoliberal urbanization parallels past industrialization as the key to capitalist expansion. Following the financial crises, neoliberal practices are upheld as the “answer to the problems perpetuating class power and of reviving the capacity to absorb the surpluses that capitalism must produce to survive” (Harvey, 2009, p. 320). Consequently, global political economic restructuring has transformed citizenship, which, Purcell (2003) argues, allows for an emergence of new barriers and new opportunities for popular power. Purcell further challenges the notion that community stakeholders are passive victims of the “unassailable” neoliberal globalization; instead, the “striking indeterminacy” that characterizes neoliberal governments provides an interesting

context to study how “power continually evades capture and creatively reworks the structures designed to tame it” (2003, p. 187).

Yet for everything these scholars contribute to the discussion of social justice and the city and the connection between social processes with spatial analyses, many of these interpretations of the right to the city ring hollow without taking seriously the role of race in the spatial dimensions of economic restructuring and deindustrialization of cities. Urban political theorist in general tend to view race as “subservient to non-racially conceived economic interests” (Thompson, 2009, p. 191). Race is reduced to a descriptive note despite its historical significance to capitalist expansion, and in recent decades, through neoliberal projects in urban politics.

Racialized Space

In grounding *space* in the *urban*, the role of physical place and local culture is critical to the formation of racialized social and political identities, yet remains underdeveloped in urban political theory (Thompson, 2009). American cities cannot be theorized without understanding race as a cultural reproduction that has to be accounted for in institutions, as seen through the maintenance and enhancement of Whiteness through residential segregation (Katznelson, 1982; Rury & Mirel, 1997; Sharkey, 2013). Race has had a historical significance to capitalist expansion, and more recently, within neoliberal projects in urban politics. *Place* can be as big as a continent and as intimate as the body, with body imagery a central part of the relationship between racism and space that configures a hierarchy of humans and non-humans (Gilmore, 2002). This is seen in gentrification processes that have transformed ‘inner-city America’ into the center of new White consumer culture, which are a product of white supremacist ideologies realized in the material landscapes of the city and “portrays black residential space as ‘spaces of pathology’ and in need of social control” (Haymes, 1995, p. 118). Furthermore, neoliberal conceptions of Latino identity and culture in the marketing of Latino neighborhoods for gentrification purposes demonstrates how certain ethnicities and races are considered more ‘marketable’ over others. This marketing of culture occurs at the “intersections between current development initiatives and people’s dreams and aspirations to place” (Dávila, 2004, p. 3).

Pauline Lipman (2007) uses spatial theories to illustrate that “education policy is implicated in the contest over spatialized inequalities, identity, and meaning in the city,” where “education is central to struggles over capital accumulation, cultural appropriation, and domination” (p. 157). Racism plays a pivotal role in capital accumulation as well as a motivating ideology in maintaining racialized power and privilege. Pedroni links neoliberal educational policymaking in Detroit and other rustbelt cities, using the Marxian theory of accumulation by dispossession to explain education as a new arena for profiteering (accumulating capital) that had not existed previously (Harvey, 2009; Pedroni, 2011). Neoliberal urbanism involves a ‘spatial fix,’ which is a process of “creative destruction that remakes the city physically and discursively” through the imagination of “someone else and not for the people who remain there” (Pedroni, 2011, p. 206).

Poststructural analyses of space can expand and challenge the political dimensions of educational policy research, such as through policy discourse analysis or the mobility, or lack thereof, surrounding parental access to market-oriented school choice options like charter schools and vouchers programs. Self’s (2005) three themes of space can be applied to school districts to theorize the politics of governance: *space as property*, *space as social imagination*, and *space as political scale*. School districts are territorially bounded, and any demarcation of boundaries is an inherently spatial and political process. Geographies of opportunities contour the regional landscape of a city, such as “the hills” versus “the flatlands” in Oakland, and to a lesser extent in Berkeley, as well as within schools, where tracking produces different spaces that encourage achievement and others that discipline. The flow of capital into certain spaces are inscribed into the notion of property values, where poorer

districts have less money to spend per child than their wealthier neighbors. Debates around re-districting, redlining, zoning, and school choice center around implicit and explicit tensions about who is deemed worthy or deserving of a good education, which institutions receive investment or disinvestment, and how these choices are decided and by whom.

Cultural Political Economy

As defined by Jessop (2010), cultural political economy “is an emerging post-disciplinary approach that highlights the contribution of the cultural turn (a concern with semiosis or meaning-making) to the analysis of the articulation between the economic and the political and their embedding in broader sets of social relations” (p. 336). This framing has led to deeper analyses of two concomitant processes under neoliberalism: the “economization” of the cultural and the “culturalization” of the economic in narratives of global development (Biebuyck & Meltzer, 2017). It allows for a nuanced balance between valuing *semiotic*, or meaning-making, aspects of social life as not only an interpretation of actual events but an explanation. This assertion follows the cultural ‘turn’ in the Marxist tradition of political economy, which eventually developed into a rift among scholars. Marx theorized that *ideology*, built from consciousness, subjectivity, and meaning, was epiphenomenal to the *material*, such as productive forces, processes, and relations of a given social formation (Babe, 2009; Leonardo, 2010). It organizes human society into the base, or the forces and relations of production, which in turn determines the superstructure, the state and civil society. Political economists influenced by traditional Marxism tend to view the “symbolic” as secondary and dependent to the “material.” In other words, economic activity and relations produce consciousness, ideology, culture, and politics (Leonardo, 2010).

The cultural ‘turn’ in Marxist thought began with Gramsci, known as the “father of cultural studies” for his focus on individual sense-making and maneuvering of structural oppression (Babe, 2009; Leonardo, 2010). The early cultural studies theorists of the British School of Cultural Studies posited that culture is a set of material practices (Hoggart, 1957; Thompson, 1966; Willis, 1977), and Raymond Williams (1983) coined the term *cultural materialism* to describe the “dialectical interplay and tension between material conditions and, among other things, language practices” (Babe, 2009, p. 362). While early cultural studies focused on working class culture, the field moved towards the argument that race and gender are both material and ideological (Hall, 1996). Stuart Hall argued that Gramsci’s use of a “dynamic historical analytic framework” that is contextually specific and a reconceptualization of hegemony that expands beyond class to other social formations has developed a non-reductionist approach to the race/class question (p. 24). By the 1980s, many of cultural theorists moved further from Marx, ‘the father,’ as Willis (1981) remarks, “[O]ur starting point should be in the cultural milieu, in material practices and productions, in lives in their historical context in the everyday span of existence and practical consciousness” (p. 49). Still, early cultural studies scholarship was in line, if not in conversation with, Marxian thought. This relationship eventually turned adversarial between poststructuralist and critical political economists (see Gandy & Garnham, 1995; Garnham & Grossberg, 1995). Inspired by a Foucauldian analysis of discourse, themes from Marxist materialism like *production*, *commodification*, and *consumption* gave way to *sign*, *subject*, and *signification* (Leonardo, 2010; Sparks, 1996).

Whereas cultural studies emphasized the cultural turn, there has been a more recent political-economic ‘re-turn’. In attempting to avoid the “dualist trap” (Peck, 2006), cultural political economy theorists sought to re-embed culture in the economy. Peck (2006) proposed that the debate could be resolved if culture and the economy are conceived as empirically-connected levels of human activity, as formulated in his *historical materialist theory of signification* that couples “matter” with “human undertakings” (p. 94 citing Jean-Paul Sartre, 1976). Sayer (2001) argued that that *critical* cultural political economic framework should not obscure economic systems in the course of avoiding

economic determinism, which means reconsidering rather than ignoring classical political economy even though it could not anticipate new political issues like the politics of identity. Fraser (1995) called for a *critical theory of recognition* that “identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality” (p. 69). As Dumas (2011) theorized in his work on school desegregation policies in Seattle, cultural political economy allows education researchers and policy analysts to better understand how the movement to integrate schools was undermined in ways that reproduced material and cultural relations of power. He argues that rather than disentangling the two, researchers will find great utility in trying to gain a clearer understanding of their entanglement.

Political Economy of Education

Political economists of education examine why education has become the central vehicle to opportunity, mobility, and welfare in the United States. Much of this scholarship draws on historical analyses to assess the limitations of “educationalizing” the welfare state at the expense of more robust social policies to address poverty and inequality. In defining the political economy of urban education in their landmark article, Rury and Mirel (1997) call for researchers to address “the spatial relationships that have shaped the existing conceptions of city schools” through an “analysis of the larger urban social and economic context and consideration of the historical forces that have brought the schools to their present state” (p. 50).

Anyon addresses the persistent problem in urban schooling despite decades of reforms to improve educational outcomes between poor students and students of color in *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform* (1997) by examining the role of poverty as a pervasive issue in urban cities and schools. In this case study of Newark and its public schools, she employs ethnographic methods, interviews with teachers and administrators, classroom observations, and historical analysis. Central to Anyon’s argument is the role of the state in creating an unequal distribution of wealth and resources, which can be mitigated through the reallocation of funding from suburban to urban schools, incentives that attract capital to cities, and taxing corporations. Local political economic process such as race and class segregation, political isolation, and the absence of economic resources has created political patronage, “ghettoization” of minority communities and schools, and municipal overburden. In what Anyon describes as a “symbiotic relationship,” city revitalization is key to reforming public schools and vice versa (p. 67). The book concludes with policy recommendations, specifically state control of failing school systems that takes a supportive approach, equity-oriented by providing resources and the renewal of school leadership through visitations and expert assistance. Anyon espouses that school reform should be an essential part of social policy reform, where the district is contextualized within different economic, social, and racial trends. Her development of a political economic framework to illuminate the impact of unequal wealth distribution on race and class politics in district and school reform was foundational for reframing the relationship between social and educational policies.

In “Educationalizing the Welfare State and Privatizing Education” (2013), Kantor and Lowe trace the evolution of education policy in connection to other federal social policy initiatives, as well as larger political economic processes and sociopolitical mobilization to contextualize its historical contingency. They assess the work of education reforms, and critique the paradox of creating policies that aim to take care of the welfare of its citizens with the reproduction of state-sponsored and molded inequality closely driven by the market:

In fact, despite the widespread disillusionment with Great Society liberalism that became evident in the early 1970s and accelerated over the next three decades, when we view the years since 1980 through the prism of educational policy, we see a reassertion of the

preference to offer protection to citizens against the uncertainties of the market by reformulating the problems of poverty, inequality, and income insecurity in terms of economic growth and educational achievement. (p. 33)

As federal priorities have set up schools to redress issues it cannot, the public has grown disillusioned with public education and in turn generating support for public programs. These high stakes have intensified the politics of educational policymaking.

Scott and Holme (2016) synthesize and examine 100 years of education reform through a political economic framework. From 1915 until 2015, American education, particularly urban districts, have gone through waves of policy paradigms that are shaped by the social and geographic landscape of race and space. From the industrialization and corporatization of school systems led by administrative progressive in the 1920s, to the deindustrialization of cities and desegregation of schools that shaped the Civil Rights Era, and to the deregulation and privatization of education and other social policies under neoliberalism. Building on the foundational work of Rury and Mirel (1997), which points to the need to attend to city crisis to better understand and improve urban schools, Scott and Holme argue that school reform, and its growing marketization, shapes “the fate of cities” (2016, p. 254). They call for research to attend to cross-district analysis, longer-term measures of policy effects, and the philosophical implications of educational privatization for democracy and civic engagement. In particular, they call for the need to consider broader social movements in relation to grassroots mobilization redefining education politics with different demands and strategies.

Some scholars have taken up the latter line of inquiry, considering housing policies and labor activism among other social movement. While grassroots and cross-sector research has long existed (Warren & Mapp, 2011; Weiner & Compton, 2008), more recent studies have been more explicit in connecting these issues with political economic conditions and theories (Dumas, 2016; Henry & Dixon, 2016). Most of this scholarship has developed throughout the 2010s by taking up qualitative approaches to the study of the political economy of education, including ethnographic methods (Buras, 2014; Cucchiara, 2013; Ewing, 2018). Ewing’s (2018) study of district administrators attempt to close the remaining neighborhood school in Chicago’s Brownsville, a pillar of African American community on south side. Her work interrogates notions of “school failure” and “underutilization” by drawing on the perspectives of students, families, and long-time community members to illustrate resistance to disinvestment through meaning, history, and struggle for power.

Educational Privatization

The scholarship on educational privatization analyzes the evolution of the K-12 education industry, which encompasses the acquisition of education services as assets by private equity companies and the retail of curriculum resources, pedagogy software, and policy ideas by Western companies and consultants (Ball, 2012; Strauss, 2013). At the local level, education agencies establish contracts with non-governmental agencies (both not-for-profit and for-profit) for designing and delivering educational services, including instructional materials and test score software (Burch, 2009; DiMartino, 2014). More recently, venture philanthropists have driven the creation of educational management organizations and educational reform advocacy organizations (Scott, 2009). This privatization is further facilitated with the emergence of portfolio districts in the form of public-private partnerships managed by school districts.

With these significant shifts to public schools has developed a large body of conceptual and empirical research that examines privatization in relation to competing visions behind the purpose of schooling. In his article “Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle Over Educational

Goals,” Labaree (1997) argues that the central problems with education are fundamentally political as opposed to the pedagogical, organizational, social, and cultural critiques of schooling most popular during that time. He outlines three competing goals of education: democratic equality (preparing citizens), social efficiency (training workers), and social mobility (preparing individuals to compete for social positions). These issues have less to do with the contradictory nature of the goals, but more so lies in the increasing dominance of one goal: social mobility. Social mobility privileges graded hierarchy, qualitative differences between institutions at each level, and stratified structure of opportunities within each institution, thus pressuring education to take on a meritocratic form. Elite parents have the most to gain from the special distinctions offered by a stratified educational system, and therefore, they play the game of academic one-upmanship most aggressively (Labaree, 1997, p. 54). This renders education as just another commodity or tool in attaining economic prosperity at the expense of liberal notions of knowledge.

Overview of Neoliberalism, Race, and Education

Scholars have explored the racial (and to a lesser extent, class) politics of neoliberal school reform and have operationalized neoliberal education policy as both ideological and material conditions (Lipman, 2011; Pedroni, 2007). Given that market-based school choice policies have targeted historically disadvantaged, under resourced students and communities through culturally relevant curriculum or a college prep vision, researchers have inquired as to why charters and vouchers appeal to communities of color. These reasons are explored in a sociohistorical analysis of race, political economy, and education, particularly the fissures and divisions of the welfare state, unions, and other public and state-led institutions. The failures and exclusions by the welfare state conduced some people of color to turn to the market for social and economic reform (Lipman, 2011), yet neoliberalism has, in turn, constrained the state’s ability to directly address racial inequality (Barlow, 2003 as cited in Scott, 2011). This history of exclusion and its connection to a legacy of white philanthropy in African American education reveals why neoliberal reforms gained support from critiques of the state (Watkins, 2001).

While this field has been dominated by the ideological dimensions of privatization, other studies have empirically examined how privatization has taken shape in school districts (Burch, 2009). Burch (2009) examines the contracts that local education agencies establish with non-governmental agencies (both not-for-profit and for-profit) for designing and delivering instructional and non-instructional services, including a diverse array of products and services ranging from instructional materials to test score software (p. 2583). This “new educational privatization” refers to the growing market for products and services driven by Federal and local accountability mandates, and is characterized by three trends. First, there is an elevation of test-related services and products, where local demand is spurred by Federal education policy (p. 2589). Second, there is an increasing emphasis on technology-based solutions, and third, an expanding role for the state in spurring market activity.

Contributions and Limitations

The educational privatization literature teaches us about ideology, societal goals, political regimes, democratic implications, and organizational partnerships under high stakes accountability. What is less known is the relationship between educational privatization and district finance, specifically how municipal bankruptcy and “crisis narratives” are linked to school district debt (Hinkley, 2015). Furthermore, the theoretical analysis of structural racism as it relates to privatization is largely absent (see exceptions Lipman, 2011; Scott, 2005, 2011). Lastly, there is a lack of attention to school facilities and other material resources.

Politics of Urban District Reform

Scholars of urban district reform have diverse and competing theories of the role of school districts; at best, they are “local laboratories of democracy” for pluralistic groups to engage with each other (Elmore, 1993; Tyack, 2002), and, at worst, they are too bureaucratic and inefficient to produce effective, quality schools (Chubb & Moe, 1991; Hill et al., 1999). Drawing on historical, technical, and political analyses of district research, I trace the evolution of district governance scholarship from district effectiveness to the race and class dynamics of coalition-building.

History of School Districts

Tyack (2002) employs a historical-political analysis of the creation and evolution of public schools to examine the tension between citizen trust in locally-controlled schools and the “weakening or disparaging” of local control by cosmopolitan policy analysts and reformers (p. 11). He frames the highly decentralized American education system as stemming from a historic distrust of distant government; a cultural attitude that elucidates, in part, why the U.S. has “the most popular and comprehensive system of public education” built on the “principle of local control” (2002, p. 9). The creation of urban school districts at the turn of the 20th century stems from the logic and trajectory of the purpose of public schooling overall: to assimilate a diversifying immigrant population and have an organized system to maximize efficiency under rapid urbanization. The fight to abolish locally elected school boards was driven by the Progressive thinkers of the 1920s and ‘30s, who believed that a corporate model that centralized and bureaucratized public services would increase efficiency. Tyack explains, “As the corporate model of school governance took hold in cities during the Progressive era, city superintendents more and more talked about business efficiency and science as guides to policy” (2002, p. 19). He frames the three main purposes of school districts as the following: everyday managerial competence, mediation between reformers and the public, and negotiation of the common good. The last of which is “deeply embedded in the history of American democracy, but often forgotten of late, this conviction holds that all citizens, not just parents, have a stake in the civic education of the next generation of students” (2002, p. 23).

While districts represent the U.S. tradition of locally controlled education, one that is unique to American politics compared to other Western nations, policymakers, researchers, and advocates did not focus on districts as the site for improvement until the 1980s (Cuban, 1984; Doyle & Finn Jr, 1984). Following the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report were four main waves of policy reform. First was the creation of state-based curriculum standards, second was decentralization and local authority over curriculum and instruction, third was test-based accountability, and fourth was school choice (Menefee-Libey, 2010).

From District Effectiveness to Local Politics and Democracy

The education policy research agenda moved from school effectiveness to district effectiveness to trace the policy shift and explore sustainable improvements in urban education, but instead Trujillo (2013) found that this new research area has recreated the same methodological and conceptual issues as the earlier school-level reform research: most were overwhelmingly case studies slanted towards district leaders’ perspectives and privilege technical approaches while undertheorizing sociopolitical factors.

The literature on urban district reform more generally has focused on the more technical aspects of school improvement, such as achievement through standardized test score data (Trujillo, 2013b). A small, but growing research strand has focused on the political dynamics of district policymaking (Henig et al., 2001), and within that, few scholars have called attention to how community stakeholders are engaged and disengaged (Marsh et al., 2015; Trujillo et al., 2014).

Community engagement encompasses a wide variety of interactions between school districts and their constituents. Other studies have examined various cases of community engagement in district reform, from participation to resistance (Ishimaru, 2014; Quinn & Carl, 2013). Students, parents, teachers, and community members contribute to local education reform efforts across a spectrum of strategies, including participation in district-led engagement meetings to protesting those same officials at board meetings. Building on the themes from the conceptual literature on the political economy of urban education, these cases illustrate the tensions surrounding visions for equity and democratic engagement.

Reformers, particularly those new or outsiders to an urban environment, frequently fail to give local history and political context the attention it deserves when attempting to design and implement educational policy alternatives (Stone, 1998). As a consequence, the academic literature has not sufficiently captured the nuanced perspectives of those with the most at stake in district reforms and how they understand strategies like portfolio districts. This theme was echoed in Trujillo et al.'s (2014) study that found these historical legacies of structural racialization shaped mistrust between community members and the school district.

Intergovernmental Relations and State Receivership

Another research strand embeds districts within policy and political economic paradigms. Some of these scholars have written about how federal and state policies have shaved away historical hegemony of local control (Bulkley et al., 2010; Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). Others have explained the alignment of these new goals with national and global economic shifts that adhere to market-oriented school reform (Ball, 2012; Kantor & Lowe, 2013).

Marsh and Wohlstetter (2013) study the shifting intergovernmental relations (IGR), or relationships between the federal, state, and local governments. These relationships are guided by underpinning debates about who should decide what is taught and tested in our schools, and what level of government should be responsible for matters of standards, curriculum, testing, and accountability. There is a general understanding about the increased role of the federal government in education policy, one that has “moved the boundaries of federalism” (Viteritti, 2012, p. 2117). Through a policy analysis of No Child Left Behind Act, Common Core State Standards, and local empowerment policies, the researchers found that IGR is not a zero-sum game; instead, relations among federal, state, and local governments are bidirectional. The authors claim that the increased federal role has opened up alternate avenues for “non-system” players, but these are market players who are, in fact, current system players. Their findings do not interrogate who is “local” – local does not necessarily mean more authentic relationships or more equity-oriented policy actors.

The connection between portfolio models and state receiverships has yet to be examined in the literature. Understanding the policy conditions under which portfolio models develop complicates the political narrative developed by many researchers (Wong, 2011). Economists overwhelmingly focus on its efficiency, yet political scientists like Wong (2011) and Henig et al. (2010) differ in their analysis by suggesting that the portfolio model, under specific circumstances, could provide a more informed and creative solution through its ‘leanness.’ These researchers have studied and critiqued the urban regimes of the past for producing educational bureaucracies that constrain educational improvement. Yet absent in their descriptions of the new urban regime is any interrogation of whether portfolio districts reproduce unresponsive, inequitable, and inefficient policies that they seek to remedy.

Domingo Morel's scholarship is useful in complicating the purpose of state receivership by challenging the notion that local community members and leaders are apathetic towards educational improvement. In *Takeover* (2018), Morel brings together a national survey of takeovers with a comparative case study of three east coast districts that have undergone state receivership to find

that the role of race and politics was a more significant factor than academic achievement. This ethnographic account illustrates urban politics beyond the actions of policy elites, to explore the perspectives of community members, such as why a predominantly African American community in Newark was more resistant to the idea of a state takeover than a Latinx community in Central Falls, Rhode Island. These nuanced accounts of race, class, and democracy provide important analysis that receiverships impact privileged and marginalized communities differently because of the unequal power dynamics among communities as reflected in democratic engagement. Political science approaches provide critical insight into regimes and other coalitional politics; however, these accounts would be strengthened with deeper knowledge about district programs and theories from education.

Summary

The scholars in the politics of urban district reform have diversified the methodological and analytical tools following the dominance of district effectiveness research in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to quantitative assessments, qualitative and mixed-method case study approaches have provided a stronger place-based analysis as well as situating reforms within a historical and political trajectory. Scholars have traced the evolution of traditional district governance to portfolio (Bulkley & Henig, 2015; Marsh et al., 2013; Wong, 2011), but less is known about how community members experience governance “redesign” in their day-to-day lives. Moreover, previous studies have not considered why some district and community leaders, rather than going the portfolio route, have chosen to maintain their improvement efforts by working within traditional public governance structures. As district and private sector leaders work to unify charter and traditional public schools under one “umbrella,” this leaves many questions about the shifting power dynamics that reshape democratic engagement – whose voices, needs, and ideas are centered and why market-based reforms, like the portfolio strategy, are advocated as the natural next step, or politically inevitable, for urban districts. While studies have pulled on data from a variety of stakeholder identities, there have been few studies that examine the entirety of diverse governing coalitions, or regimes. This requires research that brings together the diverse voices, across identity and ideology, to better understand the power dynamics that define the possibilities and challenges of urban district reform in the neoliberal era.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Schools are continuously redefined by social and economic policies as well as individuals, communities, and organizations that engage with these structures through political action (Logan & Molotch, 2007; Scott & Holme, 2016). *Governance* is a “field of contestation” where people’s interests and understandings of the issues that impact their lives and broader communities play out in the public sphere of deliberation and decision making. Education governance, which I define more fully below, has historically centered on a district’s central office and is both the place and the process where stakeholders grapple with matters of control, opportunity, and solidarity. An inherently political dynamic, governance concerns questions of power, both relational and systemic, in shaping the course of social change (Parenti, 1978; Stone, 2009, p. 227).

In Chapter 1, I introduced the context of urban district reform in the United States and posed questions around the shifting power dynamics underpinning district redesign, the role of governing regimes in shaping the racial politics of marketization, and the contradictions between theory and practice. Then, in Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature that examines these complex issues, bringing technical studies of district improvement in conversation with political analyses of new policy actors and knowledge brokers. The portfolio district research lacks a social theory critique that interrogates the democratic dimensions of restructuring, while the scholarship on urban governance under neoliberalism would benefit from a more grounded focus on education, as well as comparative analyses of neoliberal “refusals” at the local level. Based on the conceptual gaps and strengths of these bodies of literature and the problem this study seeks to address, I assembled a conceptual framework that draws on concepts from cultural political economy and urban regime analysis to understand how negotiations between structural conditions and agency play out in governance reforms, specifically how evolving strategies among elite and community advocates engage public and private actors and new technologies (Anyon, 2005; Trujillo et al., 2014). Specifically, I seek to complicate the theory of action behind the portfolio strategy, and network governance more broadly, by using a Gramscian approach to district governance research (Davies, 2011). Gramsci’s theories of hegemony and war of maneuver versus war of position conceptualize how state-market-civil society relations shape district politics and urban governance more broadly. Together, these ideas illuminate the tensions surrounding democracy and crisis, where democratic mechanisms have been tools of cooptation as much as opportunity for social change.

Governance can be defined as “the process of publicly resolving [...] group conflict by means of creating and administering public policy” (Wirt & Kirst, 2005, p. 4). Yet when we consider the political, theoretical, and ontological layers, governance is fundamentally about beliefs and desires, to the contrary of positivist and functionalist perspectives (Bevir et al., 2003, p. 4). Wilkins and Olmedo (2019) conceptualize education governance “as a field of contestation where different interests and motives conflict, collide and sometimes converge to produce struggles over meaning that involve choosing between values of an incommensurable kind” (p. 3). Making decisions and judgements means choosing between norms and values (Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009, p. 818), as seen in clashes around education budgets that underpin what, or who, is valued most by political leadership, implicitly and explicitly.

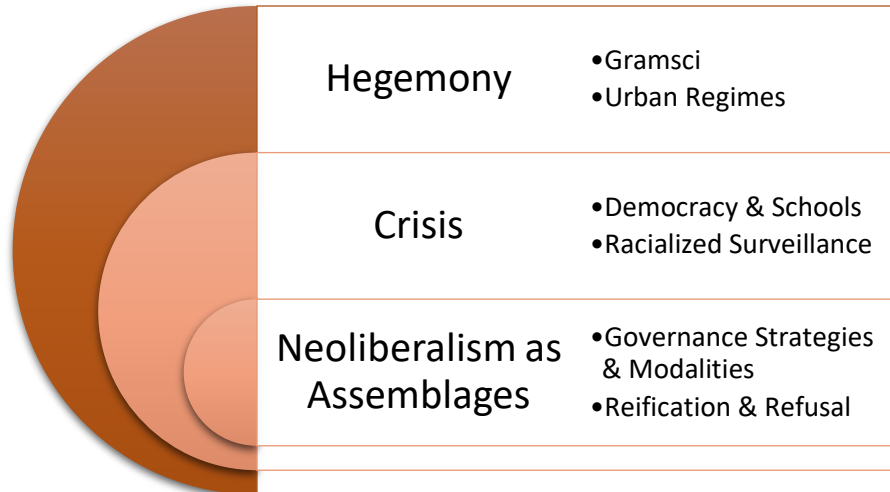
“Governance,” for the purpose of this dissertation carries a multiplicity of meanings thanks to increasing use of the term by school boards, national governments, parastate agencies, and up to “supranational” organizations like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (Jessop, 2003; Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019, p. 1). Within this widespread and sometimes contradictory usage, governance can be considered a policy strategy, political-economic project, mode of intervention, problematizing activity, vehicle of empowerment, scaling technique and discourse, or normative description (Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019, p. 1). While

governance is a theoretical concept that refers more generally to all “patterns of rule” (Bevir & Trentmann, 2007, p. 1), the term has carried a specific political connotation since the public sector reforms beginning in the 1980s. Following the neoliberal reforms under globalization that enabled the contracting out of the delivery of public services, network governance “describes a world in which state power is dispersed across various networks, each of which is composed of various public, voluntary, and private organizations” (Bevir, 2013, p. 56). Late neoliberalism demands some form of government provision to remedy the consequences of unregulated market-based policies while continuing to erode hierarchic bureaucracies -- a “third way” of governance (Ball, 2012). Network governance was supposed to be the answer, according to its advocates. I build on the scholarship that argues that, in practice, network governance institutions are replicating the government and market hierarchy and power imbalances that they were intended to replace (Davies, 2011).

Strategies to reform urban school districts reveal larger tensions between school organization, statecraft (state transformation), and the financialization of capital, where individuals, communities, and coalitions negotiate power from the local to global scale. The reorganization of central offices and redefinition of school boards and other traditional democratic mechanisms calls for an analysis of specific political processes that create new governance structures. To understand how and why a district is “buffered” from or “targeted” by education reforms based on local political economic conditions, this political analysis frames governance and neoliberal education reform as fields of contestation that are mediated and struggled over “to produce locally-adapted translations and refusals” of hegemonic paradigms (Wilkins, 2018, p. 511). While the trajectory of education governance is “a manifestation of broader political governance trends,” it also carries the potential to change these patterns through the “the production of counter-hegemonic social relations and formations” as the space for cultivating more democratic, just, and emancipatory societies (Saltman, 2019, p. xxi).

While marketization and privatization continue to proliferate across public sectors, there is a less explicit conversation about who makes decisions about the lives and educational experiences of working-class youth of color. This dissertation complicates the theory of action driving the portfolio strategy by using theories from cultural political economy and urban governance studies to conceptualize how privatization and democratic engagement simultaneously shape the political evolution of urban district governance (see Figure 2). In particular, it considers how the state receivership, a form of crisis, provided a policy window (Kingdon, 1995) for portfolio governance and other forms of privatization to emerge. These theories interrogate the conditions that made it possible for the portfolio strategy to be developed in Oakland while Berkeley maintained a public governance model, as well as the role of stakeholders’ attitudes towards district engagement, including disillusion, play in crisis narratives. I will return to the concept of governance, and the related but distinct idea of network governance, later in the chapter, but first I will discuss how Gramscian theories shape this project.

FIGURE 2. Overview of Conceptual Framework



Cultural Political Economy: Gramsci's Theories of Power and Governing Consent

Bringing together the politics of urban regimes with structural conditions illuminates both the agency and constraints in governance reform, which call for a dialectical analysis of power. To do so, this study draws on a cultural political economic framework to situate decision making and relational power within a social and systemic context that shapes what “will and will not be considered a policy choice or a social alternative” (Parenti, p. 12). *Cultural political economy* examines the cultural components of economic systems and other social and political formations, including policy (Dumas, 2011; Jessop, 2010; Jessop & Sum, 2001). The construction of meaning, as theorized in cultural political economy, is particularly relevant for critical approaches to education policy analysis, which point to the significance of the mobilization of policy ideas as well as the perceptions of political actors in transforming institutions like public education.

In studying education politics, I follow the tradition of scholars who study policy (and the state) as ideological, economic markets as social constructions, and the political economy as cultural. In order to maintain a critical gaze to structure, I turn to Gramsci's work in understanding the line between agency-structure and coercion-consent by way of theories of civil society and hegemony. Davies' (2011) use of Gramscian theory to analyze and critique governance networks illuminates critical, yet undertheorized areas of portfolio governance. It spurs two conceptual questions for my work: 1) is portfolio governance a hegemonic ideology that reifies or defies neoliberal institutional practices? and 2) why have the conditions created by public-private partnerships subverted the espoused vision of an equitable, efficient, and academically excellent school district?

A Gramscian Approach to Governance

Antonio Gramsci's (1891-1937) work has been foundational to critical analyses of global capitalism and transformative politics. I draw on the work of Gramsci and Gramscian scholars to conceptualize an alternative reading of urban district governance and politics in order to illuminate the foundational nature of meaning-making in social relations with respect to economic structures. The Gramscian concepts of hegemony and war of maneuver/war of position illuminate conditions of reform and stagnation in Oakland and Berkeley. Just as Gramsci's work is deeply historically-specific and context-bound, these concepts are only useful when applied to the world around us, or as Stuart Hall (1986, p. 7) says, “transplanted to new soil with considerable care and patience.”

To begin, Gramsci laid the groundwork for a “dynamic historical analytic framework” which posits that the economic/government structure *defines* the terrain and the horizon of possibilities within society rather than *determines* the outcome of political and economic struggles (Hall, 1984, p. 13-14). As mentioned in the literature review, Gramsci was interested in the political economy from a non-economic lens by centering culture and ideology to his political analysis. Understanding the relationship between the “structure” or “base” (state/political economy) and the “superstructure” (society) is critical to making sense of, and transforming, power dynamics:

It is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analyzed and the relations between them determined (1971, p. 177).

A Gramscian analysis is to grapple with the “the decisive passage from the structure to the spheres of the complex superstructures” (1971, p. 181). Building on these dynamics (as opposed to determined) historical forces, “relations of force” are movements of historical forces that constitute political and social struggle and development that do not have an assumed end result, or “teleological evolution” (Hall, 1986, p. 13). This dynamic approach is particularly useful for understanding that “class unity” can never be assumed because there are other conflicting interests, like racism, shaped by historically specific moments. These ideas extend the political economy of urban education by centering the role of the state and civil society in racialization. Stuart Hall applies Gramscian theories to analyze racism as fundamentally an ideological struggle that often carries contradictory beliefs, which allows a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena like working class racism. Furthermore, the non-reductionist approach to race and class analysis elucidates how race and class are unique cultural phenomena as well as historically specific social formations connected to the political economy.

Gramsci came to Marxism through his own poverty, then political struggle as a leader of the Italian Communist Party, and consequently, while imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's regime in 1926 for his radical ideas (Satgar, 2013). He felt compelled to explain why the communist revolution occurred in Russia, an agrarian society, as opposed to Western Europe. His key critique of Marx was that the state is more than repressive — the state functions through consensus that builds in civil society. Civil society is comprised of an “ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 306), such as trade unions, voluntary associations, churches, and, most relevant to this dissertation, advocacy and intermediary organizations. If the state is “the instrument for conforming society to the economic structure” (p. 208), then civil society is distinct from, yet still connected to the market and the state (Burawoy, 2013, p. 46).

A Gramscian analysis of hegemony, put simply, can be defined as “the way in which society is organized and ruled” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55-56). Gramsci expands the Marxist conceptualization of *hegemony* to more broadly include the sociocultural production of consent. This notion of hegemony privileges civil society in a way that takes seriously how dominant ideas can, as Williams explains, “saturate the consciousness of society” through commonsense notions from everyday life practices to the purpose of schooling. This conceptualization explains how certain ideas from the market sphere, like “networks as governance” or the “portfolio strategy” become the only solution to address social problems through negotiation and alliance-building. As Hall explains, “Ideas only become effective if they do, in the end, connect with a particular constellation of social forces. In that sense, ideological struggle is a part of the general social struggle for mastery and leadership - in short for hegemony” (1996, p. 43). Michael Apple (2004) illuminates the cultural politics of the political economy as mediated through human action:

Thus, the cultural sphere is not a “mere reflection” of economic practices. Instead, the influence, the “reflection” or determination, is highly mediated by forms of human action. It is mediated by the specific activities, contradictions, and relationships among real men and women like ourselves—as they go about their day-to-day lives in the institutions which organize these lives. The control of schools, knowledge and everyday life can be, and is, more subtle for it takes in even seemingly inconsequential moments. The control is vested in the constitutive principles, codes, and especially the commonsense consciousness and practices underlying our lives, as well as by overt economic division and manipulation. (p. 4)

Hegemony is historically specific, a temporary moment in the life of a society, and actively constructed across many arenas and struggles. Instead of a ruling class, hegemony is led by a historical bloc of groups allied under a particular leadership group, such as the forging of alliances between white ruling class interests and the interests of white workers against black people in the U.S. (Hall, 1984). This concept helps us to understand coalitional politics in education reform over the last three decades between wealthy, White philanthropists and some middle- and working-class African American and Latinx parents. Powerful hegemonic actors do make concessions, where the “state’s material concessions to a broad range of social interests” is an attempt to maintain influence (Tarlau, 2017, p. 680).

This brings us to the second Gramscian concept, and the core of hegemonic relations and power-building: the relationship between coercion and consent as defined through the *war of maneuver* and *war of position*. The war of maneuver predominantly uses *coercion* and is one moment of struggle that takes place on one front, and the war of position is conducted in a protracted way with multiple fronts and struggles through the use of some coercive strategies, but mainly through *consent*. This distinction contests the idea that political struggles are located completely within the boundaries of the state sphere; rather, these differences cross state-civil society boundaries (and market, as I explain throughout the chapter).

For Gramsci, coercion and consent are two sides of the same coin; as Hall (1984, p. 16) explains, “there is no pure case of coercion/consent—only different combinations of the two dimensions. Hegemony is not exercised in the economic and administrative fields alone, but encompasses the critical domains of cultural, moral, ethical and intellectual leadership.” Consent is more prominent than coercion in the marketization of education reform, although disciplinary mechanisms, such as financial stipulations, are a prime example of coercion. Consent for market-making, as argued by Cohen and Lizotte (2015), is generated through discursive mechanisms and infrastructure advanced by a network of policy actors that share funding, advocacy, and activism. Venture philanthropists, for example, and the policy networks that they fund have grown more sophisticated over time in “philanthropizing consent” (Tarlau & Moeller, 2020). The concept of “philanthropizing consent” illuminates how “foundations are using their material and non-material resources, including money, knowledge, networks, media contacts, and convening power, to build a consensus around particular public policy initiatives, rather than develop more traditional public-private partnerships or directly fund private projects” (2020, p. 6). Tarlau and Moeller’s case study of an influential foundation in Brazil framed the larger influence of philanthropy in garnering consent by bringing together unlikely bedfellows into a cohesive coalition, or bloc of support, by way of “war of position” strategies. They distinguish between coercive and consent-generating tactics to shape education policy in Brazil:

This is the difference between ‘draconian’ and ‘Gramscian’ strategies in policymaking. In the former, policies are imposed on civil society, evoking anger and often resistance; in the latter, civil society is integrated into a united hegemonic bloc in support of new policy initiatives. In

this latter process, dissent is minimized, and any resistance that does emerge is marginalized as irrational, illogical, and ideological.” (p. 22)

The process of garnering consent is nuanced and often obscures dissent and resistance as “illogical,” as orthodoxies often do.

Davies (2011) rearticulates that coercion has always been a part of hegemony. More than armed violence, coercion sits on a continuum of disciplinary action. Davies explains, “Hegemony or consent in civil society is always mediated by coercion or tacit threat – the ‘shadow of hierarchy’”. In this reading, the integral state is the dialectical unity of hegemony domination or coercion-consent” (2011, p. 106). The way that the state reacts to its citizens, through leaning towards coercion or consent, is mediated by place and how people are defined. In this vein, communities of color, overwhelmingly working class, undergo surveillance while facing the brunt of austerity measures. Policing, auditing, and violence are more present in “urban” spaces simultaneous with political efforts that attempt to build consensus for market-based strategies. Gramsci’s theory of the *integral state* highlights the way hegemony, often relegated to civil society, is connected to government and economic power. Rather than a completely separate sphere, civil society is the “terrain upon which social classes compete for social and political leadership or hegemony over other social classes” (Thomas, 2009, p. 137).

Davies (2011) advances an alternative framework of “governance networks” (the actual practice, not to be confused with the “network governance” idea discussed below) based on a Marxist reading of Gramsci. Davies posits that urban governing networks are a microcosm of the integral state in that it is filled with contradictions:

Drawing from Gramsci’s theory of the integral state, the dialectical unity of state and civil society (where ‘dialectical’ refers to an enduring antagonistic relationship), it argues that coercion is the immanent condition of consent inherent in capitalist modernity. As long as hegemony is partial and precarious, hierarchy can never completely retreat to the shadows. This dialectic plays out in the day-to-day politics of governance networks through the clash between connectionist ideology and roll-forward hierarchy or ‘governmentalisation’. The idea of the integral state thus helps to explain why ‘modernist’ continuities tend to trump any incipient trends toward network governance. (2011, p. 5)

Whereas the new market ideologues, via third way reforms, attempt to create a world where networks trump bureaucracy, the vision is undermined by the reality that the state and market have not disappeared, but instead the state has been redefined by marketization. While state managers, business leaders, and activists espouse trust and transparency, the pressures of New Public Management reforms remain pervasive, which result in crisis. Innovating governance has appealed to many frustrated with government and, coupled with the guise of increased democratic participation, speaks to disillusion of the most marginalized constituents. However, neoliberal policies actually demand technocratic management under new forms of control, thus creating new dilemmas.

Gramsci’s work on the state and civil society is critical to understanding “crisis” as it relates to education and other social welfare issues. Financial cuts constrain school districts — a coercive practice made possible by parastate organizations² like the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance

² At the global level, the World Trade Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations can be defined as “supranational state-like agencies” (Burawoy, 2003, p. 251) that serve as “hegemonic entities” (p. 241) in collaboration with the U.S. and other nation-states

Team (FCMAT) in California. Portfolio districts are micro-configurations of the integral state, suspended between external discipline by way of fiscal management (coercion) or community engagement (consent).

Network Governance: Contradictions in Theory vs. Practices

Network governance is critical to contextualizing portfolio governance within different theories of the state. Contracting out public services has been a part of the institutional legacy of neoliberal reforms in education and other public institutions, which consequently, “fragmented the state by increasing both the range of public agencies involved in public service delivery and the dependence of these agencies on a growing number of private- and voluntary-sector actors” (Bevir, 2013, p. 56). This fragmentation of government entities has created new crises which practices of educational marketization seek to fix, while simultaneously creating different problems in the process. Below, I outline the goals behind network governance, its limitations as a theory, and its contradictions in practice to complicate the beliefs and motives underpinning Oakland’s portfolio strategy. As advocates, managers, and policy entrepreneurs who uplift the portfolio model depend on technocratic approaches with little research to support its success, these contradictions have the potential to deepen financial and organizational mismanagement while fueling mistrust and inequality.

Since the 1990s, the concept and practice of “network governance” grew popular among scholars, politicians, policymakers, and advocates for its transformative potential. Bevir and Rhodes (2003, 2006) are key scholars who have theorized and expanded upon this new form of governance, which is characterized as a shift from bureaucratic hierarchies and the subsequent market strategies to a proliferation of networks. Under neoliberal reforms, new patterns of service delivery created a dependency on private sector organizations for delivering policies (Bevir & Trentmann, 2007). The *interdependence* between the state and external organizations, as highlighted by social scientists, “means that the state now has to steer other organizations instead of issuing commands to them” (p. 6). This has heightened the need for different forms of diplomacy and management in an attempt to better coordinate these loose, seemingly ‘autonomous’ networks through partnerships and new technologies (Bevir, 2013). On the ground, this looks like decentralization. Some concrete examples of network governance in practice include empowerment zones in American urban districts, England’s academy schools policy, and test-based regulatory governance in Chile (Davies, 2011; Verger & Parcerisa, 2019; Wilkins & Gobby, forthcoming).

What Ball (2009) declared as the shift from *government* to *governance* has sparked the ‘governance turn’ in education research more specifically. Wilkins and Olmedo (2019) differentiate between *education governance* more broadly and its recent use to mean networks:

Education governance is a movement or trend that seeks to [...] create devolved systems of education planning managed through the interaction, cooperation and co-influence of multiple stakeholders (Sørensen and Torfing 2007). The ‘governance turn’ in education (Ball 2009: 537) therefore designates new modes of government and governing where power is not confined to the state or to the market but is exercised through a plethora of networks, partnerships and policy communities who ‘consensually’ work with stakeholders to produce more flexible, fluid, diverse, and responsive forms of service delivery. (p. 5)

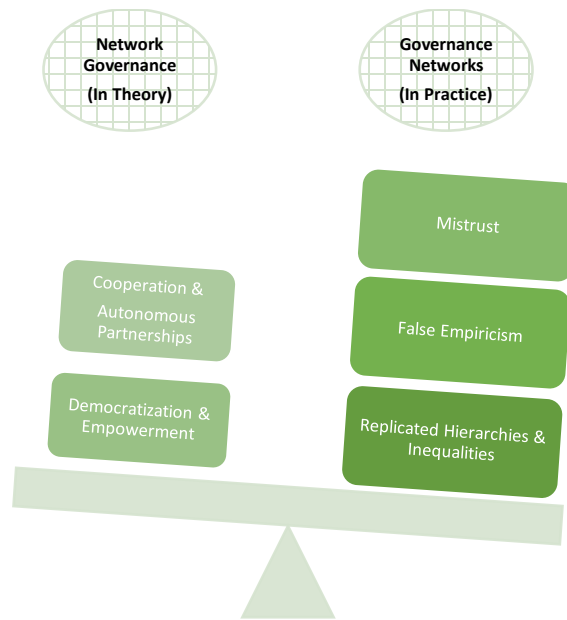
The fluid and diverse conception of governance is a response to both state and market failure (Jessop, 2000). Libertarians, neoconservatives, and neoliberals have been critical of bureaucratic hierarchies and constraints on innovation and freedom, while progressives and others on the Left point to the inequality derived from consumer competition (Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019). These new

forms of service delivery aim to overturn some of these failures by intervening through a “third space,” which, in its most ideal state, would empower communities in the public sphere and cultivate inclusive and deliberative policymaking in increasingly diverse, pluralistic societies (Deakin and Taylor, 2001). Network, or new, governance has appealed to the sensibilities of elites and subalterns to the point of becoming an established orthodoxy: the new common sense (Davies, 2011).

Interpretivist theories of governance as a cultural formation, influenced by post-structuralism, have provided some important understandings about why particular forms of governance are viewed as legitimate within certain places and eras and how philosophies shape policy problems and solutions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010; Newman, 2007). These scholars have largely drawn from post-structuralist theories of governmentality to critique the governance literature, reframing governance as an ‘order of rule.’ This shift to the social brings attention to the “rationalities underpinning a particular form of rule and how these are sustained not only through strategies of legitimation but also through institutional practice. It opens up questions about the incompleteness of governmental projects or the contradictory features of new regimes of power...” (Newman, 2007, p. 64). The notion of governance as cultural formation brings new understandings, such as spatial analyses of both social practices and multiscale interactions, as demonstrated in the transnational flow of policies and policy discourses (Ball, 1994; 2012; Gulson, 2007). However, there are many limitations to interpretive approaches to governance and being governed; some lack a critical lens, for example if scholars focus exclusively on micro-interactional dynamics to the point of ignoring the coercive aspects of state and market structures.

There is a disconnect between the market idea and the complicated reality: network governance is not that different from what preceded it. The empirical work on the subject identifies network governance as largely a performative strategy that “often turn out to be the same kinds of institutions as those they were meant to transcend, replicating hierarchies, exclusions and inequalities and arguably aggravating endemic distrust” (Davies, 2011, p. 7). Network governance is a post-bureaucratic vision of politics that has failed to realize due to its proponents misconstruing the blurred boundaries between state, economy and civil society as the potential end of hierarchies. Figure 2 below delineates an important distinction between *network governance*, the ideal, and *governance networks* (Davies, 2011). Whereas power is supposed to be distributed “outwards” towards parastatal organizations (such as inspection, credentialing and commissioning bodies) and “downwards” to community stakeholders in *network governance* (Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019), the actual fragmented and devolved systems of governmental and non-governmental coordination in *governance networks* come with a new set of problems. In practice, governance networks favor decentralized education planning, where the pursuit of transparency comes with increased surveillance through increased use of target-setting, performance management, and data tracking instruments. Davies (2011) points to critical inconsistencies: “A key task in rethinking governance theory is therefore to determine why ‘governance networks’ do not live up to the promise of ‘network governance’” (p. 3). The contradictory nature of trust-based education networks filled with mistrust “captures elements of a neurotic government (distrustful, anxious, maladjusted) unable to fully accept the vagaries of its own reform” (Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019, p. 7).

FIGURE 3. Network Governance versus Governance Network



While education governance has not lived up to its ideal, the discourses and modalities of education policy and service delivery are, in fact, changing (Ball, 2012). There are many new voices, ideas, and practices that shape the flow of knowledge and gain legitimacy in a globalized economy. These networks are comprised of multilateral agencies, national governments, NGOs, think tanks and advocacy groups, consultants, social entrepreneurs, and international businesses that blend traditional and new forms of policymaking. In local education institutions across the U.S., England, and New Zealand, the attempts to decentralize authority to local actors, such as schools and parents, in the name of equity and empowerment have led to *disintermediation* (Lubienski, 2014), which is the process of withdrawing of power and influence from meso- or intermediate-level educational authorities, like districts. However, Lubienski (2014) explains that this process is far from participatory:

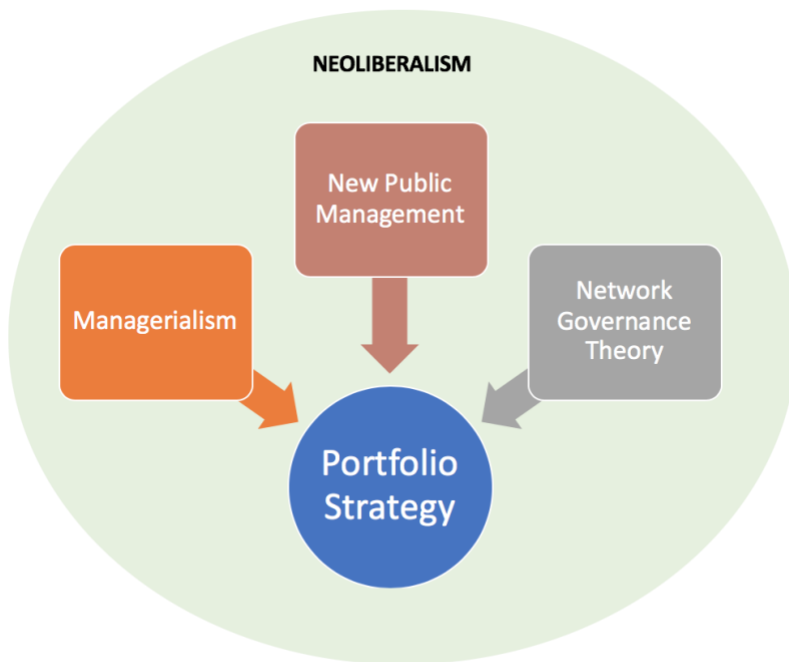
rather than simply devolving power away from intermediate authorities to local actors in order to produce more effective or equitable outcomes, many of these reforms have been more successful instead in creating the conditions in which new, non-state actors are able to accrue policy power for themselves. (p. 423)

Even as education/network/new governance continues to evolve and be contested, it remains the orthodoxy, understood as “the unwarranted assertions and silences of dominant paradigms” (Davies, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, it is critical to interrogate who benefits and is marginalized from the network orthodoxy, and more specifically, the normative bias towards portfolio strategies to solve the complex issues facing public education.

Portfolio Strategy Under Four Paradigms

This study takes up Davies’ (2011) assertion that network governance is one manifestation of neoliberal hegemony. In addition to network governance, I theorize that the three other paradigms are underpinning the marketization of urban districts. As displayed in Figure 4 below, the portfolio strategy is a mix of four contingent paradigms: neoliberal ideology, new public management, network governance, and managerialism. Despite their differences and overlapping objectives, they are all considered orthodoxies in the current era of education policy and reform.

FIGURE 4: Paradigms Shaping the Portfolio Strategy



Neoliberalism is an ideology and practice that advances “individual self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment of the public sphere” (Lipman, 2011, p. 6); it has redefined economic and social policies as well as political thought over the last four decades. As I synthesize in the conclusion of this conceptual chapter, neoliberal practices have evolved into many facets and modalities. In comparison to the Keynesian reforms that framed the state as responsible for certain social needs and civil rights of its citizens, the “neoliberal social imaginary” redefines individuals from citizens to consumers “empowered” by taking advantage of opportunities provided by the market (Lipman, 2011, p. 11; Scott, 2011). This paradigm is at the core of the school choice policies, which portfolio models are intended to manage. In the economization of the cultural sphere, the very term itself comes from the investment portfolio metaphor.

Neoliberalism as a concept suffers from both “omnipresence (treated as a universal or global phenomenon) and omnipotence (identified as the cause of a wide variety of social, political and economic changes)” (Clarke, 2008, p. 135 as cited in Wilkins, 2018). In particular, activists and researchers on the Left have real concerns about naming and challenging this common sense, yet these political motivations may be watering down the concept from a potentially powerful analytic tool into a “detached signifier” (Wilkins, 2018, p. 510). Furthermore, Wilkins contends that in education research, neoliberalism is more often asserted than it is critiqued.

From a Marxist and political economy perspective, neoliberalism is an ideological hegemonic project designed to maintain new means of capital accumulation and class power among groups of elite transnational actors (Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism can also be viewed from a Foucauldian and governmentality perspective to denote a governmental field of power in which subjects are summoned and activated to behave in certain ways, normally concomitant with the political ends of government (Dean 1999; Rose 1999). In both cases, however,

neoliberalism is in danger of becoming a detached signifier where there is not focused attention on the interconnections between the whole (the abstraction we might provisionally term neoliberalism) and the part (the day to day organisation of schools and school systems more generally). (Wilkins, 2018, p. 520).

This study takes up Wilkins' (2018) call to remedy the issues of claiming neoliberalism as a normative description and analytical framework by developing the "thick description of the ground logics and deeper frames shaping the development of schools as organisations" (p. 520). In the conclusion of this chapter, I discuss the way that I develop that thick description using assemblages.

If neoliberal ideology has reorganized social life as much as the political economy, *new public management* (NPM) is the governing tool that reorganizes public service organizations on the basis of managerial and market principles (Anderson & Cohen, 2018). The central principle of NPM is the idea that "service providers share characteristics which can be evaluated, measured and compared to determine their effectiveness, efficiency and continuous improvement" (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Wilkins, 2018, p. 515). The "accountability" movement in educational policymaking is a prime example of NPM, which has fostered individualized teaching and learning goals, autocratic decision making, and standardized practices consolidated through centralized leadership (Trujillo, 2013b). The "technocratic embedding of routines of neoliberal governance" (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 384) is key to portfolio management where consultants are hired to manage auditing techniques, performance appraisals, and standard evaluation frameworks (Wilkins, 2018).

The "management" component of new public management is part of a longer tradition of managerialism, which can be traced back decades prior to the neoliberal era. Beginning in the private sector, *managerialism* refers to the "new organizational layer between the worker and the owner of an enterprise" via the creation of shop-floor managers (Anderson & Cohen, 2018, p. 57). The emergence of middle management was codified in Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). Rooted in many of these political problems is an assumption that experts know best in advancing efficiency. The emergence of education "professionals," expert control, and business techniques redefined public schools through technocratic terms. The administrative progressives of the 1920s and 1930s created a bureaucracy that was supposed to hold schools to higher standards while assimilating the influx of new immigrant students. The consolidation of power into a centralized, highly hierarchical system concurrently shifted power and agency out of the hands of families and communities.

They tried to develop 'scientific' ways of measuring inputs and outputs in school systems as a tool of management, and to elaborate ways in which the school might rationalize its structure and curriculum to fit new industrial and social conditions (Tyack, 1974, p. 136).

Moreover, the centralization and bureaucratization of education has been an attempt to keep "ignorant" people out of decision-making, and essentially to leave the education sector in the hands of people who are "competent experts" (Tyack, 1974, p. 131). The theories of action undergirding portfolio strategies are rooted in (false) empiricism, hierarchies, and notions of a removed, rational actor.

While in the same lineage of neoliberalism, network management is theoretically different from the management practices of neoliberalism in that it posits an attempt to govern from "afar" and devolve power — an attempt to rectify the problems of marketization. What network governance theory provides to the study of district partnerships is the critique of markets (paradoxically, while expanding and institutionalizing said markets), and an appeal to the "empowerment imperative" (Scott, 2013) by introducing new actors and decision-making practices

to traditional policymaking spaces. On the other hand, in line with managerialism, the fragmentation of public services has created new problems that only policy network governors can solve using accountability and surveillance tools amid growing mistrust of local actors and community members. Like neoliberalism more broadly, education governance is a “self-contradictory form of regulation-in-denial” (Peck, 2010, p. xiii). Together, these concepts illuminate why privatization, whether explicitly through the portfolio strategy or implicitly through public governance, is justified by participants in this study.

Urban Regime Analysis

This chapter draws on *urban regime analysis*, more popularly known as *urban regime theory*, to understand how a city’s racial and economic landscape shapes the coalitional politics of district reforms and why governmental and nongovernmental actors have united to form a coalition around district initiatives (Stone, 1993). Coalitions can provide opportunities for capacity building that benefit underserved communities (Rogers & Orr, 2011). However, as I will show, not all stakeholders are able to share in power and decision-making, and there is often disproportionate representation of elite business interests over community members’ concerns (Shipps, 2011). According to Stone (1989), a regime is “an informal yet relatively stable group with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making governing decisions” (p. 4), where collaboration is achieved through both formal institutions and informal networks. This conceptualization represents a shift from the pluralist model of politics to attend to the complex issues of power in governing coalitions from a political economic approach (Stone, 1993).

Rooted in the political science scholarship, this framework posits that community players relate to one other through *urban regimes* and that policy change requires a shift in the relationships that tie political arrangements. The notion that governance is not limited to government and instead includes a diverse array of actors from the private and civic sectors allows for a deeper understanding of coalitional politics, and it serves as the political and policy paradigm that urban districts operate under today. Urban regime analysis tenets include civic capacity and ‘power to.’ *Civic capacity* is created when stakeholders see a collective value in an issue beyond individual concern, which is built through a contribution of resources and an understanding of issues (Stone, 1998). In reconceptualizing the Weberian concept of ‘power over,’ urban regime analysis uses ‘power to’ emphasizing social production over social control (Stone, 1993; Trujillo et al., 2014).

Theories of public-private governance are critical in studying the nuances of educational marketization, where the lines between the public and private sectors are increasingly blurred (Bulkley et al., 2010). Yet regime analysts diverge from structuralists by framing politics and the economy as a two-way relationship rather than the modes of production as a ruling determinism (Stone, 1993). While earlier studies employing urban regime analysis focus on *who governs* at the expense of *who is governed* (Stone, 2009), more recent studies have elevated community stakeholder narratives offering a deeper illustration of how urban power and politics shape community support for district-level reforms (Trujillo et al., 2014). Recognizing the disparate and sometimes contradictory political values of the various actors in these struggles is key to understanding the extent to which market options alleviate or reinforce educational inequities in urban districts.

Urban regime analysis has been critiqued for undertheorizing the role of race and racism (Henig et al., 2001; Horan, 2002; Orr & Johnson, 2008). As Horan (2002) summarizes, “urban scholars have too often studied race by focusing on the behaviors or attitudes of racially identified political actors without paying sufficient attention to the structures, informal practices, and political discourses” that make race a power relationship (p. 20). According to Edwards (1996), Stone’s focus on the importance of resources, cooperation, and mutual gains to urban power dynamics results in a

market-based, voluntaristic model of power that inadequately attends to race (Horan, 2002). Taking into consideration these critiques, I draw upon and expand urban regime analysis in this study to more thoroughly attend to the ways race contours power in urban district reform.

Urban regime analysis leads to questions like: How have education regimes in each case shaped district governance and education reform in their public school systems? What values, goals, and strategies define each regime, and which stakeholders have resisted these dominant frames? What are the implications of these coalitional politics of public-private partnerships on educational equity and opportunity for low-income students of color and their communities? I draw on urban regime theory to analyze the alignment between political regimes and ideological paradigms and how this can lead to portfolio initiatives. This study illuminates how education regimes have defined the parameters of district policies and social change in Berkeley and Oakland. In Chapter 7, I analyze not just *who* is involved (the policy actors and community stakeholders), but what ideas they have about educational equity and democracy for each district's public schools. These actors constitute *regimes*, rather than typical *coalitions*, because their policy ideas, staff, and funding have been institutionalized in district and city leadership spanning two decades - far beyond electoral tenure. Coalitions can come and go much quicker.

CPE and URA in Urban District Reform

Cultural political economy and urban regime analysis provide conceptual connections and nuances to urban governance, which the school district reforms in this dissertation are cases of. The politics of urban governance sit at the crux of state, market, and civil society dynamics, where actors negotiate the line between agency and structure. Given that governance of schools as organizations is continually “mediated and struggled over in the context of locally situated dilemmas, obligations, normative commitments and dispositions,” these concepts provide the tools to connect a multilayered process and factors that shape the policy options and political discourse that define urban districts across the country today (Wilkins, 2018, p. 510).

The theories of urban governance and urban regime analysis work well together because the role of hegemony in state-market-civil society relations can veer towards “all-encompassing” grand theory that loses significance in the lived realities of political actors, while urban regime analysis can lack the social theory needed to move beyond description to analytical claims. Urban regime analysis brings a process-oriented political lens that fits well with Gramscian approaches to power at the local level. An *education regime* can be framed as a *hegemonic bloc* grounded at the local level, with a closer focus on the changing relationships, strategies, and goals amongst urban education leaders across sectors. When in conversation with each other, critical and political science theories explain how “systemic power is the relationship between public and private power at the macro level, negotiated and enacted at the city scale through regime politics” (Davies, 2011, p. 18). These theoretical claims lead us to consider the crises that define the problems and solutions of public education reforms, as well as its resistance.

A Conceptualization of Portfolio Governance and Democracy Under Urban Crisis

“Only a crisis-actual or perceived-produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.”

– Milton Friedman

Crisis is often the impetus to shaking up politics and governing systems. Crisis provides a tumultuous context when the stakes feel so high that it is nearly impossible for stakeholders to seek alternatives beyond the most dominant, quick solutions typically grounded in market strategies. As described by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), a crisis is a moment of extraordinary politics that provides the perfect storm to suspend democratic norms to justify neoliberal demands. From the military coup in Chile in 1973 which led to the privatization of state-owned industries, elimination of trade barriers, and cuts to government spending, to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017 that led to incorporating public-private partnerships into the island's electrical power system, this “shock doctrine” (2007) utilizes crises like wars, coups, terrorist attacks, market crashes, or natural disasters as a means of disorienting the public towards the inevitability of privatizing public services.

Various forms of crisis have defined problems and solutions in education reform efforts. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) was the seminal policy report put forth under the Reagan administration that deemed American public schools as failing to meet the national and global demands for a competitive workforce and critiqued the quality of teaching and learning in American schools. The public and media uproar created the political impetus for reform efforts in the decades to come, justifying high stakes accountability measures and deregulation while reclaiming education as a conservative issue (Mehta, 2013). In another crisis shock, contractors flocked to New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 for the opportunity to ‘rebuild’ the city, followed shortly by charter management leaders interested in restructuring its school system filled with majority Black students and teachers. From global politics to local issues in urban education, neoliberal projects are most often tested in poor Black and Brown communities — urban ghettos viewed as places in need of saving. This paradigm shift in public governance to hybridized public-private models normalizes marketization as a commonsense strategy through public “consent” (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015).

In critiquing the profit motives driving educational privatization practices, it is important to not reduce the role of government, and the state more broadly. Gilmore and Gilmore (2008) similarly argued that critiques of the profit aspect of prison growth distract us from the role of the state, which elites have attempted to redefine as an “antistate state” under neoliberalism. I draw on their theory of the state as a “territorially bounded set of relatively specialized institutions that develop and change over time in the gaps and fissures of social conflict, compromise, and cooperation” (Gilmore & Gilmore, 2008, p. 143). There is an important analytical difference between *states* and *governments*:

If states are ideological and institutional capacities that derive their legitimacy and material wherewithal from residents, governments are the animating forces — policies plus personnel — that put state capacities into motion and orchestrate or coerce people in their jurisdictions to conduct their lives according to centrally made and enforced rules. Through the exercise of centralized rulemaking and redistribution, a state's purpose (at whatever scale — municipal, county, national, etc.) is to secure a society's ability to do different kinds of things: such as tax, educate, support, connect, exclude, criminalize, segregate, equalize, make war, and make profits. (p. 143)

States matter, and remain important under neoliberalism, because their patterns of activity permeate political culture to the point of “encourag[ing] some kinds of group formation and collective political action (but not others), and make[s] possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)” (Skocpol, 1985, p. 21). The state power is constantly in flux, with highly diverse and complex relations with actors, social groups, and local communities (Hibou, 2004; Gilmore & Gilmore, 2008). This understanding is echoed in Gramsci's theoretical redefinition of the state,

which Hall (1986) explains transformed from a reductive orthodox Marxist version of the state as a “coercive instrument of the ruling class, stamped with an exclusive class character which can only be transformed by being ‘smashed’ with a single blow” to one that is ideological, educative, and key in constructing hegemonic strategies (p. 18).

The state, therefore, plays an important political and cultural role in shaping how citizens not only engage with education reform, but with the purpose of schooling more broadly. The theory of action behind the portfolio strategy asserts that differentiating schools, primarily through contracting out services to private providers, and holding them accountable to common, rigorous standards will create more innovative, efficient, and high-quality schools (Hill, 2009; Hill et al., 2001). Where the architects of the portfolio strategy undertheorized the role of community stakeholders twenty years prior, if not completely excluding them, advocacy organizations and think tanks today are focused on mobilizing parents, students, and teachers around reforming district-charter relations. As schools are privatized, the mechanisms that facilitate engagement are also changing. District reorganization is not simply saving money, or organizational efficiency, or getting better, equitable outcomes for marginalized students. When we consider the democratic dimension of private governance and funding, it illuminates ideas about who has the right to shape decisions about their public schools.

Governing Austerity: State Takeovers and Racialized Surveillance

What makes public schools unique among other American institutions, besides being publicly funded, is the level of democratic oversight in their decision making, from elected school boards to legally-mandated committees. These democratic mechanisms do not mean, however, that all constituents are included, nor that the outcomes of their decisions lead to justice. Like American democracy more broadly, democratic engagement for public education has been a vehicle to create, reify, or justify discrimination as much as it has provided opportunities for oppressed communities to access power. Democratic mechanisms have played a pivotal part in manufacturing hegemony in capitalist societies, where consent is built from the unwavering belief in the ability to “exercise an ultimate self-determination within the existing order” (Anderson, 1976, p. 30; Davies, 2011). Danielle Allen (2016) defines *civic engagement* as “public action undertaken through approved venues and within the confines of long-standing public agendas” (p. 33). Hence, most public action takes place outside of the confines of narrow mechanisms of engagement; as Domingo Morel (2018) asserts in his study of state takeovers, “decades of fights to provide black students equal access to public schools and equal funding for low-resourced public schools have required political struggles” (p. 12). Public critiques of government are not limited to “new governance” or neoliberal governmentality – working class and communities of color have faced unresponsive or even violent forms of public governance for centuries.

Coupling this conceptualization of democracy with the ‘dark side’ of citizenship as “a mechanism of state control and rule” (Guarnizo, 2012, p. 12) is critical to understanding the complexity of and barriers to community engagement in school districts. State repression is particularly critical in theorizing the role of race and racism in shaping democracy, citizenship, rights, and the urban commons, where spatial fragmentation and containment of low-income minorities in segregated areas has been key for political economic stability (Thompson, 2009, p. 200). Beyond *membership* and *rights*, democratic citizenship begins with political imagination and empathy. Racism has “constricted democratic imagination and empathy for non-whites, leading to limited notions of political community citizenship” throughout American history, a “White citizenship” of sorts (2009, p. 198). Thompson (2009) explains:

No modern economic system can function without government. No government can survive for long without ‘the people.’ The tension between degrading people in the economy

and uplifting people in democratic discourse is a profound challenge to governance. It is in this realm that race has proved invaluable, and also that cities have proved invaluable. Race allows for degradation of minorities, without provoking a larger legitimacy crisis of democracy. Cities allow for the spatial concentration and containment of degraded minorities. Politicians and judges have found clever ways to manage this racial/spatial tension - by targeted enforcement of drug laws, by restricting forced school busing to integrate schools, and by turning a blind eye to exploitation of immigrants in urban areas. (p. 201)

Hence, urban crisis, as seen in state takeovers of local school systems, is also about people frustrated with how their schools are governed; that is, who has power, and whether influential political actors value local knowledges and experiences. When district leaders create strategies for engagement, some constituents question whether it is authentic or simply tokenizing. As parents, students, teachers, and other community members navigate ‘where do we go from here?’, the study of district governance requires a critical perspective of democracy itself. This critical perspective reveals what parts of district privatization are more palatable to the public, to government, and to parents (who are increasingly identified as “consumers”), while unpacking a deep mistrust of ‘community engagement’ that does not authentically or equitably engage the most marginalized members of the public.

Scholars and activists alike have argued that democracy is imperiled in the neoliberal economy. Beyond privatization, neoliberalism should be understood as a governing rationality that redefines democratic engagement; as Brown (2015) explains, “Equality as a matter of legal standing and of participation in shared rule is replaced with the idea of an equal right to compete in a world where there are always winners and losers” (para. 8). American democracy may be in crisis; however, for many people of color, democracy has rarely been just. Therefore, the current crisis stands to deepen already existing inequality. To understand the new governance of portfolio-style school districts is to return to the familiar, enduring issue of educational “crisis,” but with a new perspective. A holistic lens takes into account how race and class shape the narratives of power in urban education, and it also considers how community members with little power are increasingly disillusioned with democratic processes that excludes them, intentionally and unintentionally. Part of the consent process utilizes democratic processes in civil society to justify expansion of dominant political projects, as Gramsci explored in describing the working class gaining certain social and labor rights (Burawoy, 2013; Gramsci, 1971). Due to this process, strands of Marxism continue to be relevant in examining, and seeking to change, the “question of capitalism’s durability and flexibility in the face of the crises and struggles it produced” (Burawoy, 2013, p. 44).

Rethinking Neoliberalism as Assemblages: Hegemony & Alternative Possibilities

A study of urban district reform provides insight beyond the boundaries of public schools. The concepts that guide this study help us to understand the political economy through an analysis grounded in the everyday politics and practices of educational actors and stakeholders. This last section of the conceptual framing provides concluding points about local translations and refusals of neoliberalism in school districts.

As I analyze in the literature review in Chapter 2, a growing number of studies have turned their focus, and critiques, on neoliberal education reforms, pointing to the importance of understanding the shifting landscape and power dynamics surrounding public education. However, Wilkins (2018) makes the case that neoliberalism is a fine “first approximation” (Hall, 2011), or starting point, but it is limited as a normative description if it does not capture the complex terrain

of school organization, political contestation, and governance. This framework draws on Wilkins' (2018) use of *assemblage thinking* to trace the complex realities of neoliberalism in education governance reform:

'Assemblage thinking' (Higgins and Lerner 2017b: 3) offers a useful set of analytical tools and perspectives for tracing empirically 'the complicated distribution of neoliberal governmentality' (Clarke 2008: 138) and grappling with the complexities of 'actually existing neoliberalism' through a focus on the 'mundane practices through which neoliberal spaces, states, and subjects are being constituted in particular forms' (Lerner 2003: 511). Instead of focusing exclusively on the 'resultant formation' or sedimenting domination, assemblage thinking prioritises the 'processes of assembly' (Higgins and Lerner 2017b: 4) through which neoliberalism is grafted onto other elements and entities. (p. 518)

Assemblage thinking challenges us as researchers to move away from trying to prove or assume that the political economic paradigm is "naturally tending towards structural coherence and unity" and instead a "always provisional, unfinished and partial" process (Wilkins, 2018, p. 518). This approach requires disciplined inquiry to interrogate the continuities and contestations that give way to power relations that need to be reassembled. Other scholars have drawn on similar theories to study the 'messiness' of policy enactment in schools, where the "creative processes of interpretation and recontextualisation" produces different translations of policy discourse on the ground (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 3). Policy discourses are not limited to the formal government apparatus, nor are they wholly defined by the values of those tasked with implementation (school leaders, teachers, district staff, and board members). Rather, "policy discourse is a messy hotchpotch of disparate elements that are grafted together to produce situated, sometimes problematic alignments between the demands of government and parastatal authorities and the interests and motives of school actors" (Wilkins, 2018, p. 24). These findings build insight into how districts are "zones of mediation" (Oakes et al., 2005) or "terrains of dispute" (Tarlau, 2017, p. 121).

Cultural political economists have called attention to *sub-hegemonic* as well as *counter-hegemonic* practices, both of which I find useful in interrogating the provisional and resistant aspects of neoliberal assemblages. Sub-hegemony is the local translation of broad hegemonic ideals to fit a specific context, sometimes referred to as the "hegemonic echo" (Martin-Barbero, 1993). This sub-hegemonic echo is critical in revealing how ideological power is legitimated and customized in redefining local common sense. As Sum (2004) explains, "this echoing through translation and negotiation of hegemonic meanings may involve extending, re-phrasing, hybridizing and technicalizing the meanings of buzzwords that can be (re-)embedded in the regional/national/local contexts" where status is conferred upon individuals and institutions that quickly co-construct and repeat hegemonic discourse into the mundane practices ("Production of Sub-hegemony," para. 1). Hegemonic projects are contingent, and despite their dominance, can actually be illusory and fragmented. Hegemony is a fragile process prone to instability, which creates the space for counter-hegemonic movements. Counter-hegemony is a critique or attempt to dismantle hegemonic power. Whether it be through crisis or everyday contradictions of individuals, the "gap between discursive justifications and actual practices opens space for alternative conceptions of society" (Sum, 2005, p. 21). Hegemony often means that certain identities, interests, and communities are excluded at the structural level, whether by race, class, gender, territory, which could provide fissures in manufacturing consent amongst all groups of people. By tracing these inconsistencies through research, it provides the potential to deconstruct neoliberal technologies of power and work towards different, potentially more emancipatory possibilities.

Assemblage thinking helps us to understand Berkeley Unified and Oakland Unified in relation to each other as neoliberal translation and refusal. Through comparative inquiry, I use these cases to help make sense of changes, alternatives, and entrenched continuities. In Chapter 4, I present the way I operationalized these concepts into a research design to best analyze the growing repertoire of governing technologies. These can be further classified into governing modalities, strategies, and discourses (Anderson & Donchik, 2014). *Modalities* are more structural and long-term compared to *strategies*. Some examples of new governance modalities include “think tanks, public-private partnerships, network governance through interlocking boards, aggressive forms of philanthropy, or social entrepreneurialism” (p. 4). Strategies can be *political*, such as spurring states to compete for funds through the Race to the Top grant in 2009, or *discursive*, such as the reframing of “equal educational opportunity” to the “achievement gap” and then eventually the “opportunity gap” (p. 4-5). I draw upon participant observations as well as interviews to map the shifting landscape of urban governance and capture the sense-making of education reform stakeholders during times of crisis.

Social theory is a crucial instrument for drawing political connections that have been lost and erased amid the de-historicized and de-contextualized educational landscape. Under the managerialist impulses and manufactured crises of neoliberalism, “anti-thinking techniques” employed by government and business administrators claim “neutral, universally valuable and disinterested forms of governance” in the name of efficacy (Saltman, 2019, p. xxii). As Saltman explains, “social theory allows people to think about how some of these hierarchical forms are employed to delink understanding from the possibilities for collective control and agency” (p. xxi-xxii). The concepts introduced in this chapter frame my dissertation to capture both hegemonic dominance and the radical possibilities under the new education governance paradigm (Anyon, 2014).

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

When people find out the nature of my work, such as in a Lyft carpool, I am often asked, “Why are public schools so bad?”, “How do you fix them?”, and “Are you for or against charter schools?” Beneath many of these questions lies a desire to place the blame on someone or something for what is in reality a complex system to reform. This dissertation study goes against the very core of questions like these that seek to find a silver bullet. That same search for a silver bullet drives much of education politics and reforms. Rather than a definitive solution to “solving the education crisis,” I unpack why policies, like the portfolio strategy, continue to be upheld as the common-sense solution, and I demonstrate the role of crisis in creating policy possibilities or obscuring alternatives. This project requires methodological tools that allow a multifaceted, place-based approach to interwoven issues that characterize urban governance, leading me to a qualitative research design that uses comparative case study methodology.

As I reviewed in Chapter 2, the literature on portfolio districts has largely used case descriptions to explain and expand on the portfolio concept from the architect, Dr. Paul Hill, without interrogating the limitations of these ideas. Grounding my inquiry in the political theories outlined in Chapter 3, I draw on qualitative methods (interviews, participant observations, documents) to capture political behaviors around coalition-building and to unpack district community engagement approaches in generating consent for the market-based approach. In this chapter, I review the research design and methods of the dissertation. I begin with an overview of my research questions and comparative case study design, describing how the study was designed to address conceptual and methodological gaps in the research literature. Next, I describe the data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis. I then turn to a description of the cases followed by the limitations and strengths of the study’s design. I conclude with reflections on researcher positionality, epistemological orientation, and the unique challenges of studying urban district reform.

Research Questions

This study utilizes a *comparative case study design* to illuminate the specific ways local city politics, local policy actors and stakeholders, and education reforms create distinct policy discourses and governance models within the same region (Yin, 2006, 2014): Oakland Unified School District’s (OUSD) *portfolio* model and Berkeley Unified Schools District’s (BUSD) *public governance* model. My research compares the districts across three levels: context, district governance, and community and elite advocacy. The first level situates OUSD and BUSD within the political economic context, grounding local governance and privatization in both city history and the California context guiding school finance, charter law, and receivership. Finally, I investigate the race and class politics of regime building as the level of agency and negotiation where stakeholders assert power and influence to shape their districts.

Specifically, this study asks questions in a series of domains:

1. **Context: What are the political and historical factors that are associated with two urban districts’ current governance models?**
 - a. How have the politics of crisis shaped the development of these divergent strategies?
2. **District Governance: What are the characteristics of each district’s governance model, and how are their differences and similarities related to place-based conceptions of power and democracy?**
 - a. What are each district’s priorities, staff roles, decision making processes, funding sources, and community engagement strategies?

- b. What does governance restructuring, or lack thereof, reveal about community members' beliefs about the purpose of public education and ideologies of the state?
- 3. ***Community and Elite Advocacy: What are the race and class politics of each district's coalition-building efforts? In what ways do regimes gain and wield influence in education reform?***
 - a. What are the guiding values and goals, strategies, and networks of the stakeholders comprising each regime?
 - b. How have resistance and alternatives to marketized governance been mobilized, and by whom?

Comparative Case Study Design

This dissertation employs a *multiple-case embedded design* (Yin, 2014), where multiple units of analysis (governance areas) are compared across local contexts (city and district), BUSD and OUSD. Since the portfolio strategy is distinguished from past education reforms in that multiple policies work in conjunction with one another (Hill et al., 2001), an embedded case design provides the methodological tools to focus on its multiple policy areas. Case study methodology is integral for studying this era of district governance and politics given that previous scholarship has suggested that local context matters is critical in the implementation and impact of portfolio models (Bulkley & Henig, 2015). Because case studies are considered more useful for studying specific programs than events and processes (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014), I focus on district governance (and its reorganization and evolution) as my unit of analysis to bound the many processes (policy, sociopolitical, economic, and historical) that intersect to shape these two cases.

Case study methodology has many strengths, one of which is the ability to “examine, in-depth, a ‘case’ within its ‘real-life’ context” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). This is particularly useful for clarifying the relationship between the phenomenon and context. The *case* itself is a “a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2); this unit or entity is considered a “bounded system” (Smith, 1978) integrated with many “working parts” (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Merriam (1998) defines qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 139). The strength of case studies in illuminating complex meanings through a rich and holistic account of real-life situations is ideal for unpacking the power dynamics shaping district policies in Oakland and Berkeley, such as the racial politics of coalitions building influence in the reform landscape. This includes attention to dynamics that may not seem immediately related to district policies, such as gentrification and facilities. The flexibility in level of focus is both a strength and a weakness of case studies. Hence, subunits, like specific district initiatives, can provide “operational detail” to avoid unwarranted abstractness (Yin, 2014, p. 55). I analyze each embedded subunit on its own as well as provide a holistic political analysis of the district's governance, and then I compare across district cases.

Comparative case studies have the advantage of exploring and interrogating rival theories on a given process, allowing for more compelling interpretations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). In this case, what political and organizational factors made the portfolio strategy possible in one district and explain its absence in another? I draw on multiple embedded subunits, or points of comparison, selected by theoretical sampling, to highlight specific areas of portfolio governance (Table 1) (DiMartino, 2014). The complexity of the district context requires a qualitative approach to illuminate its contours and trace the evolution of an increasingly popular education reform strategy.

Case Selection

Illustrating the nexus of district governance, privatization, and community engagement in education reform, my cases are located in the Bay Area, California, a region defined by its activism, neighboring tech industry, and philanthropic investment in public policies. I focus on two mid-sized neighboring districts that serve as cases of urban district governance to illuminate the politics that lead or deter the emergence of portfolio districts, and by extension, privatization more broadly.

I chose these cases because Oakland Unified has a portfolio model based on public-private partnerships while Berkeley Unified has traditional district governance model where the central office operates nearly every school and all services. Tracing how and why district leaders and stakeholders may resist district policies and initiatives, including the portfolio strategy, will build a more dynamic understanding of education politics. Comparison case studies provide the analytic tools to highlight the complexities of urban history and education politics that define urban district reform. This requires a research agenda that explores more deeply the ideological underpinnings of coalition-building, one informed by legacies of urban political efforts defined by race and class. As school districts redefine their purpose as ‘managers’ of school options, it is critical to explore the potential opportunities provided by portfolio districts as well as the possibilities for building district capacity beyond contracting out core public services to private entities. I bounded the study between 1999-2019 because those two decades saw many reforms in each district, with a distinct change from the first to the second decade. Table 1 outlines the key points of comparison between the two districts that led to the selection of these cases.

TABLE 1: Demographic profile of schools, district and charter

	Oakland Unified	Berkeley Unified
<i>City population</i>	429,082	121,643
<i>Number of Students</i>	49,245	10,534
<i>Free/ Reduced Lunch</i>	71.2%	31.4%
<i>English Learners</i>	32.9%	9.3%
<i>Race/ Ethnicity</i>	Latinx: 43.8% African American: 22.9% Asian: 12.3% White: 11.7%	Latinx: 15% African American: 24% Asian: 8% White: 32% Multi-ethnic/Other: 15%
<i>Strategic Plan</i>	Blueprint For Quality Schools	2020 Vision
<i>Number of district schools</i>	Total: 116 District: 83 Charter (OUSD-authorized): 33	Total: 17 District: 16 Charter: 0 (only charter closed in 2019)
<i>State/ County-authorized charter schools</i>	12	0
<i>Per Pupil Spending</i>	\$14,760	\$17,043
<i>Teach For America Presence</i>	Yes, 1991-Present	No

Case Descriptions

Oakland Unified School District

“The Town” now tops the lists of the most exciting places to live where “new restaurants and bars beckon amid the grit” (Williams, 2012), marking a sharp shift from the tax revolt where White people fled from “urban ghettos” forty years earlier in this same region (Self, 2005). Oakland has undergone significant gentrification, which has most impacted its Black population, dropping from 46% of the city’s population in 1980 to 25.4% in 2015 (Census, 2015). This mid-sized city of 400,000 residents has big politics; more than \$825,000 in independent expenditures were poured into the 2016 school board race, including from Wall Street billionaire and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, who gave \$300,000 to an independent-expenditure committee with ties to charter-school groups (*East Bay Times*, 2016).

At the heart of the city, Oakland’s public schools have been the site of political imagination, innovation, and contestation. The school district was once a laboratory for racialized intelligence testing used for tracking, as facilitated between Stanford researchers and then-superintendent Fred Hunter – the same superintendent who turned school bonds over to businessmen in the 1920s (Epstein, 2006). As Oakland grew more racially diverse and the Black population more politically active, resistance to federal and state desegregation mandates was exhibited through the outmigration of over 150,000 Whites, overwhelmingly married couples with children, in the span of ten years, 1955-1965 (Self, 2005). Between 1960 and 1966, white residents moved from areas of Oakland with high concentrations of Black residents (Fruitvale, East Oakland, North Oakland) to other parts of the city (Foothills and Oakland Hills). This intra-city White flight led to the creation of Skyline High School, a school that only drew from affluent neighborhoods in the hills (Epstein, 2006; Spencer, 2012). What subsequently followed was a limited open enrollment program that gave less affluent and poor students the opportunity to attend wealthier, more White, and higher achieving schools.

In the 1960s, the Black Panthers held free breakfast for youth in West Oakland through their Free Breakfast for School Children Program. While some Black liberation leaders critiqued civil rights as an assimilationist approach, others worked together to form the Oakland Black Caucus to work on education, among other issues. In 1970, residents protested and succeeded in bringing Marcus Foster, a Black principal and district administrator who championed community-focused, whole-child driven education (Spencer, 2012). While some revered his work, he had his critics. In a dramatic turn of events, Foster was assassinated by the Symbionese Liberation Army for his position on police officers in schools.

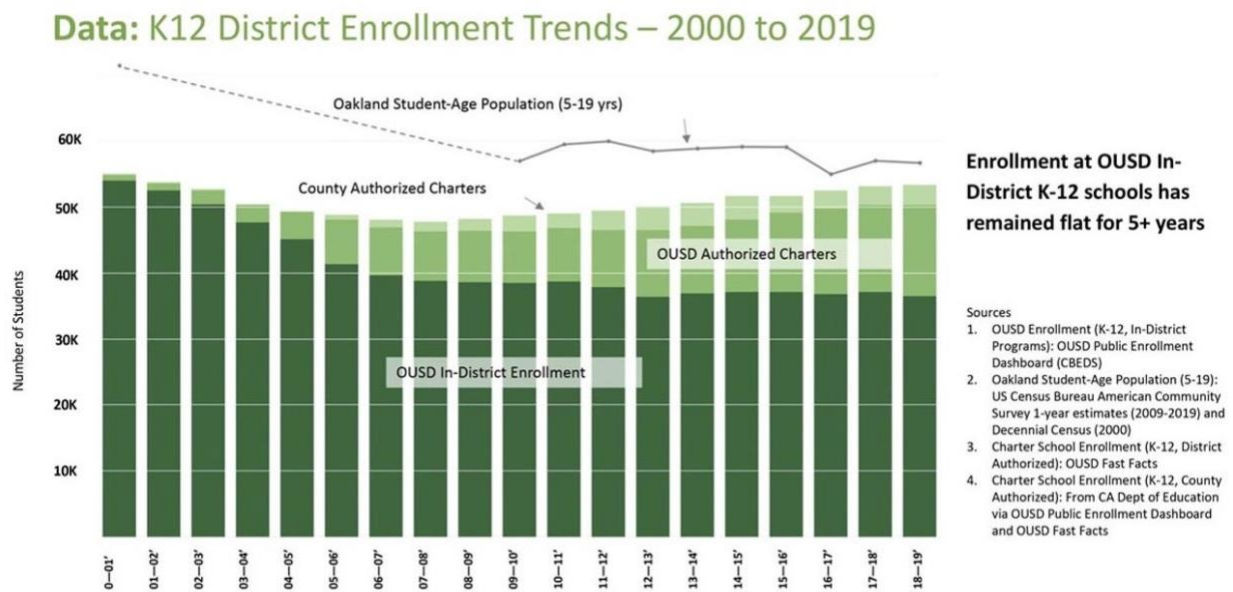
Just as people of color were getting elected into municipal and district offices, Oakland was grappling with a dwindling tax base caused by white flight (Epstein, 2012). During this transition, the Oakland school board resisted an attempted state takeover in 1988. While state receiverships due to bankruptcy were a growing trend in aggressively reforming urban public schools, Oakland became one of the first districts to reject state trusteeship in 1989 when the majority-African American school board rejected a state loan and instead presented an alternative option, via “Certificates of Participation,” that allowed them to maintain public governance (Epstein, 2006; Gordon, 1989). The district eventually underwent state receivership in 2003, known more colloquially as the “state takeover.”

Over the past three decades, Oakland has served as a testing ground for mixing alternative, community visions of schooling with entrepreneurial, market-based education reforms. For example, the small schools movement (1999-2006) inspired educators and organizers in the Bay Area looking for an alternative to district bureaucracy with something more aligned with their parent engagement work (Davidson, 2002; T. M. Trujillo, Hernandez, Jarrell, & Kissell, 2014). However, despite early gains in test scores, student achievement eventually stagnated, and the Gates Foundation pulled its funding, leading to some small schools to be converted into charter schools. Throughout these

years, Teach For America has had a major presence in Oakland, spurring a number of influential education leaders in the charter, district, and corporate sectors. TFA Bay Area began in 1991 and now has over 321 teachers across 52 schools in Oakland, Richmond, San Francisco, and San Jose, with 78 of those teachers in Oakland (TFA Bay Area, 2018).

OUSD has witnessed a proliferation of charter schools. In 2000, OUSD had approximately 54,000 students. Overall, district enrollment has declined by more than 17,000 students, dropping to 36,000 students in 2017 (OUSD, 2018). The decline in student enrollment has significantly impacted the district's budget, which went from a deficit of \$35 million in 2003 to \$100 million in 2011 (Katz, 2012). During this period, charter enrollment increased. Despite these challenges, OUSD continues at the forefront of current educational initiatives, including restorative justice, full service community schools, and the African American Male Achievement.

Figure 2: OUSD Enrollment and Share of Charter School Enrollment, 2000-2019



Source: Graph by Patrick Hodge for *East Bay Express* (2020). OUSD Enrollment (K-12, In-District Programs): OUSD Public Enrollment Dashboard (CBEDS); Oakland Student-Age Population (5-19): US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates (2009-2019) and Decennial Census (2000); Charter School Enrollment (K-12, District Authorized): OUSD Fast Facts; Charter School Enrollment (K-12, County Authorized): From CA Dept of Education via OUSD Public Enrollment Dashboard and OUSD Fast Facts.

Together, Oakland's municipal and educational landscape highlights the layered issues that surround governance reorganization and community struggle in education reform. OUSD is a critical case of a new urban regime politics advancing the portfolio strategy in a rapidly gentrifying district that is grappling with equity goals and market demands. Situating Oakland's portfolio strategy in relation to gentrification and the local political economy more generally helps to contextualize private contracting as both a response to dwindling district resources and a booming housing market, as well as an attempt to appease families from different backgrounds and neighborhoods. While clashing interests and contestations over access to power have long existed in

Oakland politics (as in many diverse cities), gentrification has heightened these tensions between working class communities of color with a long history here and incoming wealthier, and often White, professionals and families. In the education arena, these tensions and collaborations, both long-standing and emerging, play out most prominently in the district's portfolio of school choice options.

Berkeley Unified School District

Neighboring Oakland to the north, Berkeley is home to a prestigious public university, a hot bed of political activism, and a hub for cultural and intellectual exchange. Images of Berkeley often capture the Campanile bell-and-clock-tower sticking out amid the backdrop of green rolling hills, the literal ivory tower standing tall as a symbol of the University of California, Berkeley. The university is a staple in the local economy, employing nearly a fifth of its residents and shaping the local businesses that cater to over 40,000 college students. Berkeley is a special place in history thanks to the social movements that coalesced (or clashed) on campus and into community, including Civil Rights and Anti-War movements, Black Panther Party, and the Third World Liberation Front. Most notably, it is the site where Mario Savio and other major figures of the Free Speech Movement protested the administration's ban on political activity, as well as an attempted alt-right cooptation of the "Free Speech" in 2018. One can still find the hippie counterculture of 1960's wandering the streets of Telegraph Ave, although it is quickly disappearing as high-priced condominiums replace used book stores and co-ops.

Prior to these movements, Berkeley had a conservative, White political leadership for decades until the 1970s when multiracial student coalitions and Black migration from the south brought a politically engaged constituency that shifted the city Left — but not without a fight from the old guard (Tien, year). Berkeley remains a "community of contradictions" (Samuels, 1970) where peace, love, and Berkeley United Against Hate contrasts with homeless encampments, a militarized police force, and one of the largest Black-White achievement gaps in the country (Reardon, 2017). A New York Times article from 1970 described Berkeley as the following:

The city that has adopted this elaborate busing schedule is one of the loveliest in the country. Berkeley, has a temperate climate and splendid vistas of green hills, exotic gardens and the Golden Gate. It has no dreary core ghetto like those in New York, Chicago and Washington; yet the southwest section of town, while no slum, is certainly segregated. Berkeley voted against a fair-housing ordinance so as to maintain residential segregation; Negro unemployment sometimes rises to 20 percent compared with a white-unemployment rate of 5 percent. (Samuels, 1970, para. 15)

This quote reveals the limits of White progressivism, which is seen throughout the country, where integration is limited to the schools and stops short of housing.

Outsiders have lamented about the stubbornness of its residents in doing things the "Berkeley Way." But there is some reason. As an epicenter of the disability rights movement, it was the first city to implement a curb cut program to support mobility in the early 1970s, around the time the Ecology Center started the first curbside recycling program in the country. In 1984, gay activists from Berkeley's Domestic Partner Task Force fought and passed domestic partner legislation, which became a model for similar measures in the U.S. In 2014, the city council approved a measure to provide free medical marijuana to low-income patients, while voters approved the first soda tax in the country. But the city's true civic pride resides in its 1968 voluntary integration plan, the first large city to use busing to integrate all of its public schools.

Education reform efforts largely centered on desegregation in the 1970s and again in the 2000s through attendance re-zoning (Kirp, 1982). In response to the limit on property taxes through Proposition 13 (1978), the Berkeley community supported a special local tax in 1986 called the Berkeley Schools Excellence Program to supplement loss of funding for its public schools. Voters continued to approve the bond measure over the years, a sign of trust in local government and a strong held belief in public institutions. However, the fight to get these ambitious projects off the ground was only the beginning of a long string of racial problems in Berkeley's schools. Berkeley gained national attention around its work with the achievement gap after the 1994 documentary film *School Colors* revealed the painful inequalities that exist within the same high school. This spurred a number of initiatives throughout the 1990s and 2000s, such as Pedro Noguera's Diversity Project and the small schools movement. The Berkeley Alliance was created in 1997, a partnership of the City of Berkeley, the Berkeley Unified School District, and UC Berkeley. However, the alliance did not have teeth until 2009, when district, municipal, and civic leaders coalesced to design the "2020 Vision," a strategic plan to improve educational equity and quality.

The Berkeley Unified School District has limited school choice options, with only one charter school that recently closed in 2019, but there is a private school ecosystem that some wealthier parents move between before returning to Berkeley High. There is also relatively less philanthropic investment, with the Berkeley Public Schools Fund channeling donations into classrooms based on what teachers say they need. Today, the district's strong school integration plan has been upheld against multiple lawsuits, yet the gentrifying south and west sides signal a future revamping. Today, complaints of "over-enrollment" are heightened as some residents push back on "illegal transfers" of students, mostly aimed at those who are Black and Latinx, into their school district as homeowners pay higher property taxes to replace state funding. Residents have expressed their frustration with the hypocrisy of with the liberal ideal, yet continue to fight to live up to the city's progressive promise. Just as Berkeley High students were swept up in the free speech and civil rights movements fifty years ago, today they continue to join, and sometimes provoke, activism today, as seen in the protests against Trump's election and in support of Black Lives Matter.

Data Collection and Analysis

As an investigator, I aimed to "discover, understand, and gain insight," and therefore, *purposeful sampling* was used to select research sites, time, people, and events "from which the most can be learned" (Burgess, 1984; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2011). Data collection methods include interviews, observations, policy document analysis, and quantitative analysis of secondary data conducted between 2014 and 2019. In addition to all of the data that I collected independently for this study (detailed below), this dissertation also draws on a limited amount of data from a larger, five-year study (Principal Investigators: Drs. Tina Trujillo and Na'ilah Nasir), which explores equity issues around the implementation of district-wide, full-service community schools through oral history interviews with key stakeholder groups in Oakland, California. As one member of a research team, I helped collect most of the interview data for that study between November 2013 and August 2015, along with a few additional interviews in August 2018.

Interviews

I conducted 60 semi-structured qualitative interviews with a range of policy actors and stakeholders, such as teachers, district leadership, board members, students, parents, community leaders, education advocacy staff, grassroots organizers, union representatives, and philanthropists (see Table 2). Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Two interviews were conducted in Spanish while the rest were in English. While nearly every interview took place in person, I

conducted a few interviews (N=3) by phone due to conflicting schedules or geographic limitations. Interview participants were selected based on their ability to speak from diverse perspectives about district partnerships and local politics. Specifically, I aimed to include those ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of each district’s education regime to help articulate the participation, ideologies, and political strategies of each governing coalition. After the initial round of purposefully-sampled interviews of leaders in each community, I employed a snowball sampling method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to connect me to additional potential participants.

TABLE 2: Respondents by Stakeholder Type/Sector

Stakeholder Identity/Affiliation*	Total Number	Number from Berkeley	Number from Oakland	Both Districts
Superintendents	2	1	1	--
District Administrators	6	2	4	--
School Board Members	9	4	5	--
Other Elected Officials	2	--	2	--
Principals	2	1	1	--
Teachers	8	5	3	1
Parents/Guardians	3	2	1	--
Students	2	--	2	--
Community Members & Organizers	4	2	2	--
Philanthropists	4	2	2	--
Advocacy Staff	5	--	5	--
Union Leaders	4	2	1	1
Charter Network Leaders & Board Members	6	1	5	--
Intermediary Organizations Staff	3	--	2	1
TOTAL**	60	22	35	3

*While many interviewees could be listed in several categories, for example a teacher who is also a union leader, I chose the primary affiliation for each person.

**Ten of these interviews came from the Structural Racism and Targeted Universalism Study (SRATUS), and were re-analyzed for the purpose of this dissertation.

The differences in the number of participants in each case approximate the similar proportion in population in each district. BUSD is a smaller district, with one fifth of OUSD’s population, which is why there is a smaller number from Berkeley (22) than from Oakland (35).

I created a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix A) based on previous research, theory, and a pilot study I conducted on gentrification and district facilities in Oakland Unified. For consistency across interviews, I created protocols based on Patton’s (1990) framework using informal, open-ended, and more formulated questions. I customized each protocol with an additional five to eight questions specific to each participant’s role, growing more tailored throughout the course of the study. While participants were given the option of using a pseudonym in order to protect their identity and the identity of their schools and organizations, every participant agreed to share their identity and organizational affiliation. All interviews were recorded, with participant consent, and recordings were transcribed through a transcription service.

Participant observations

To illuminate the interaction between various constituencies and interest groups in the public sphere, I observed 40 meetings and events from 2014 to 2019 related to education reform and district initiatives in Oakland and Berkeley (see Appendix). These in-person observations included school board meetings, district community engagement meetings, bond oversight committee meetings, philanthropic-led panels and other private sector education events, and

political rallies. These meetings are open to the public, and most of the district meetings are recorded and available for the public to view on their websites or YouTube, which I often referred back to in writing up my fieldnotes. Since school board meetings occurred regularly during the nine-month school calendar, I used a semi-structured fieldnote structure that captures specific areas (e.g., consulting, stakeholder interactions, funding, decision-making processes, coalitional coordination, and disagreement). For the rest of the meetings and events, observations were unstructured.

Document analysis and secondary quantitative data collection

I used content analysis to review documents from 1999-2019, including policy briefs, school district materials, organizations' informational leaflets, and news articles and opinion editorials to provide multiple perspectives on local educational issues. For non-government materials (e.g., think tanks, advocacy), I drew from ideologically and geographically diverse organizations and groups. Financial profiles and contributions from foundations and donors to the political candidates and officials, 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) non-profit organizations, and political action committees they supported were analyzed from online data compositories (including 990 and 990PF tax forms). Websites include the Federal Election Commission, GuideStar, GlassPockets, ProPublica, and Open Disclosure Oakland. Additional quantitative data was used to describe the city and district demographics, including city and neighborhood population demographics from the Index of Dissimilarity and detailed data on poverty, health insurance information, language, and Title I funding from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Data Analysis

My coding strategy blended inductive and deductive approaches drawn from the data as well as political economy concepts, educational marketization, and urban regime theory to analyze which local political arrangements and coalitions are shaped to build and leverage power (Stone, 1989). I used Dedoose as the qualitative data analysis software to code my interviews, fieldnotes, and documents. Initial codes were based on research questions and the embedded cases, but remained open and flexible as more data was collected and findings emerged. These codes were developed through a codebook where I defined and refined the parent and child codes through standardization, along with data matrices to organize and compare data. Drawing from the coded data, I wrote analytic case memos across a cluster of codes for each district individually and comparatively.

Validity in Qualitative Research

The purpose of qualitative case studies is to delve into a particular phenomenon and build theory, not to generalize to entire populations (in this case, urban school districts). Scholars have debated the definition and applicability of "validity" and "reliability" within qualitative research given their positivist origins (Merriam, 1998; Schensul et al., 1999a; Yazan, 2015). I shared select field notes, interview excerpts, codes, displays, and memos with a closed community of eight doctoral students for feedback. These conversations held me accountable to identifying biases as well as examining alternative analyses. Additional strategies for enhancing the external validity or generalizability for my findings included analyzing multiple cases and conducting pilot interviews (Merriam, 1998). Each district's education regime is defined by the stakeholders' perceptions through qualitative inquiry. However, in analyzing the in-depth interviews, stakeholders' perceptions of who holds power cannot be presented as an essential truth due to the nature of subjectivity. While the use of snowball sampling can run the risk of selection bias because it relies on volunteers for in-depth interviews, I started from multiple nodes and actively recruited interviewees who I thought would have differing perspectives. Furthermore, triangulation is key to strengthening the

validity of this study's findings. During my in-person observations, I got to hear from many more stakeholders, not just the ones who agreed to be interviewed. Document analysis helped mediate limitations from snowball sampling and self-report since it provided more objective measures of collaboration and conflict among organizations. Quantitative data from IRS 990s and other financial data helped to refine the boundaries of urban regime theory through triangulation of mixed methods.

Researcher Positionality, Epistemological Orientation, and Challenges in Studying Education Politics

My epistemic commitments underlie how I conceptualize and operationalize disciplined inquiry. My belief that the nature and production of knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995, p. 99), also known as constructivism, shapes the research process “from the selection of the phenomenon of interest that is put under scrutiny to the way the ultimate report is composed” (Yazan, 2015, p. 136). Scholars have maintained that constructivism to a certain extent is key to all qualitative research:

The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interact with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own. (Merriam, 1998, p. 22).

A researcher's approach to knowledge production is intertwined with their *positionality*, or their relation to the sociopolitical context of the study as shaped by one's own identities.

Researcher positionalities shape *subjectivities*, which are a combination of the persuasions that stem from class, race, gender, sexuality, ability and other statuses and values that interact with research subjects and objects (Peshkin, 1988). The process of actively seeking out my subjectivities requires mindfulness of its potentially enabling and disabling effects on my study's conceptual framework, methodologies, data collection, and data analysis. As a mixed-raced Chicana, growing up middle class in a working-class community, whose parents (one of whom is a long-time educator) navigated through a highly marketized and segregated public school system, I have an affinity to certain people, ideas, and struggles. My connection to the comparative case study brings many insights along with hurdles, shaping my interaction with stakeholders. This has particular implications for the qualitative data collection of interviews and participant observations, which are deeply interactive research methods.

In living and working in Berkeley and Oakland over the course of my graduate degree, I have been read as either a ‘community member’ or a ‘gentrifier’ depending on the context, and the privileges of being a UC Berkeley graduate student have both attracted research participants and drawn deep criticism. One of my first research participants, a longtime Bay Area resident, was firm about educating me on these power dynamics, imploring me to reconsider the use of “research” in my outreach given the working-class mistrust of academia. “People in the School of Education have made careers off of studying Black people in West Oakland,” he told me. Through a process that inspired both discomfort and growth, these are the tensions that I learned to recognize, articulate, and eventually embrace throughout the process of conducting this dissertation. Through “critical subjectivity” (Reason, 1988), I developed an awareness of my experiential knowledge in order to “raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process” (p. 12) rather than suppress or get overwhelmed by it.

In *Research at Risk*, Vanessa Siddle Walker highlights the importance of understanding that the “nuances of appropriate cultural interaction, public discourse, and private meaning are all vital components in achieving data that are authentic” (1995, p. 13). Without this authenticity, researchers risk publishing incorrect results. Authenticity was even more paramount in gentrifying (and gentrified) cities like Berkeley and Oakland, where the “real” stories were being displaced along with the people telling them. Oakland in particular is a highly politicized landscape where stakeholders wanted to be clear about where I stood on the divisive ‘charter issue’ and what I intended to do with the findings before agreeing to meet with me. In building rapport with participants and engaging in new spaces I had not previously been a part of, I had to be authentic about my intentions in this work. It was a reminder that education researchers, more so than other disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields and foci, are expected to be in constant engagement with educational practitioners, and that an intellectual passion to explore issues was not enough when schools were faced with urgent dilemmas. Still, a significant number of participants were familiar with research, having gone to graduate school themselves, or had already participated in studies, which was more common in studying the Bay Area.

Some welcomed a nuanced perspective to the issues, while many were skeptical of claims of neutrality - as am I. I experienced stratification growing up in Milwaukee which eventually spurred me to build community power as an organizer around public education and immigration reform; I could not and did not want to then set aside my ideological beliefs as an academic. It was much easier for me to express equity values than to reveal my own stances on school choice and privatization, given that I interviewed ideologically diverse participants ranging from staunch advocates to critics of charter schools. To gain their trust I had to commit to being open to every perspective and approach their experiences with empathy, thus enriching the quality of information shared. But through this project, I also interrogated power and privilege in the critical tradition (Apple, 1979, 2004) by analyzing how some participants’ actions and beliefs did foster injustice in often unintentional ways. My values pushed me to a rich, complex depiction of the politics of urban district reform.

Siddle Walker’s call for “meaningful reciprocity” (1995, p. 13) challenged me to consider the tangible returns I offered to my study participants for sharing their knowledge. The power dynamic between researchers and participants is complicated by the fact that I also interviewed some very powerful actors, including a millionaire philanthropist. What I could give was an opportunity for people to process their experiences, many of whom appreciated the space to reflect when everyday life provides little opportunity to do so. Beyond that, I hope that my dissertation provides an analysis of the districts that can be helpful to people on all sides of the issues in gaining new perspectives and thus eventually shaping more equitable policies that better serve historically marginalized students and their communities.

FINDINGS

OUSD Timeline (1999-2019)

While space limits preclude discussing these in detail, the following is a timeline of portfolio district components that emerged before, during, and after the state receivership:

- 1999 – An audit conducted by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, independent education agency of the state, recommends outsourcing district services.
- 2000 – Mayor Jerry Brown creates education commission, adding 3 mayoral appointees to the school board.
 - The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation donates initial \$15.7 million (eventually totaling \$40 million) to fund Oakland’s small schools movement led by Oakland Community Organizations and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (now known as The National Equity Project).
 - The Oakland school board approves its New Small Autonomous Schools policy, which focused on the development of small schools, and votes to create 9 new small schools.
- 2003 – OUSD undergoes state receivership due to district budget deficit of \$35 million dollars. State superintendent appoints Randy Ward, who was trained at the Broad Academy, to lead the district.
 - From 2003 to 2007, the district closed seven large, middle and high schools and at least seven elementary schools - those in the city's poorest neighborhoods - and reopened smaller, themed ones in their place. Forty more small schools were developed during these five years.
 - Oakland Public Education Fund is formed to increase and centralize fundraising for district and charter schools and advocacy organizations.
 - The Rogers Family Foundation is founded to focus on reforming Oakland’s public schools.
- 2004 – Five elementary schools are closed: Burbank, Marcus Foster, Longfellow, John Swett and Toler Heights.
- 2005 – Five more school closures: Washington and Golden Gate Elementary and Kings Estates, Lowell and Carter middle schools.
 - “Expect Success” results-based budgeting is implemented with \$24 million in funding from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation along with Oakland-based Rogers Family Foundation. Led by the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES).
- 2006 – Open enrollment for high schools begins.
- 2009 – OUSD moves to partial state receivership (what exists today) with \$89 million in debt.
 - School board approves interim-Superintendent’s \$17 million mid-year budget cuts.
 - Great Oakland Public Schools (GO) is founded, a 501(c)(3) non-profit and key education reform advocacy organization.
- 2010 – GO Public School Advocates, 501(c)(4), is founded.

- Gates Foundation declares the small schools movement a failure and stops funding initiatives in various cities, including Oakland, NYC, and Milwaukee.
- 2011 – Another five OUSD schools are closed: Marshall, Lakeview Elementary, Maxwell Park, Santa Fe and Lazear.
- 2013 – The board approves the district’s “Quality Schools Development” policy which states that OUSD provides a “continuum of high quality schools” that encompasses both schools operated by the district and charter schools authorized by the district.
- 2014 – Antwan Wilson, trained by the Broad Academy for urban district leaders, is selected to serve as OUSD superintendent.
- 2015 – Educate 78 is formed, a non-profit education advocacy organization that promotes “strategic giving and leadership.”
- The Oakland Public Schools Pledge (formerly the “Equity Pledge”) is developed.
- 2016 – A “common enrollment system” is introduced to streamline school enrollment through one application for both district and charter schools. Following strong community resistance, the policy is not passed by the board.
- 2017 – The Blueprint for Quality Schools begins, a community engagement initiative that provides a needs assessment around “school and central office reconfiguration.”
- District faces deficit of \$23 million, budget cuts of \$9 million, threat of renewed state receivership
- 2018 – 1Oakland initiative, led by GO, officially begins and claims many of the above components.
- Board passes “Community of Schools” policy calling for district-charter collaboration for Oakland students.
- 2019 – OEA teachers’ strike

BUSD Timeline

- 2000 – BUSD is fined \$1.16 million by the state for not reimbursing teacher development days.
- Led by UC Berkeley Professor Pedro Noguera and BHS teacher James Williams, the Diversity Project wraps up 4 years of longitudinal and in-depth research around racialized successes and challenges among Berkeley High students.
- Groups of educators begin to coalesce around small schools reform, including personalized learning with a social justice lens.
- 2002 – The state requires BUSD to work with FCMAT on their evaluation and to create a 5-year improvement plan with funds appropriated from the district budget.
- FCMAT is brought in as a fiscal adviser to BUSD by the Alameda County Office of Education, whose office failed to approve the district’s 2001 budget.

- 2003 – FCMAT begins its review of BUSD.
- 2004 – Berkeley Schools Excellence Program (BSEP) parcel tax is reapproved by Berkeley voters for \$8 million, which started in 1986 to support small class sizes and music programs.
- The district reevaluates their integration plan using different metrics due to the affirmative action ban via Proposition 209 (1996). Legal scholars and researchers found that socioeconomic status, parent education levels, and languages spoken at home were proxies for race.
- 2005 – FCMAT progress report on BUSD states that the “fiscal solvency has been restored.” Alameda COE’s approval of BUSD’s budget leads to FCMAT being removed from its fiscal advisory role.
- School board unanimously votes to pass the Small Schools Initiative, creating four small schools and one comprehensive program at Berkeley High. BAYCES served as the consultants on the project and facilitated a \$1.4 million grant; however, BUSD is not a grantee of the Gates Foundation.
- 2006 – BSEP was renewed through the Berkeley Public Schools Educational Excellence Act.
- Citing Prop. 209, American Civil Rights Foundation sues BUSD, its superintendent, and its school board for alleged constitutional violations in assigning students among the School District's 11 elementary schools, and in assigning students to academic programs within the School District's only high school. (*American Civil Rights Foundation vs. Berkeley Unified School District, S172258*).
- 2009 – A California appeals court rules that BUSD had not violated the law with its 2004 plan, as the school assignment was based on neighborhood diversity, not student race.
- The 2020 Vision begins as a citywide initiative with the aim of eliminating racial disparities in academic achievement in Berkeley’s public schools through academic outcomes, school attendance, and family engagement.
- Cathy Campbell begins tenure as president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (2009-2019)
- 2011 – REALM, Berkeley Unified’s first charter school, opens its doors.
- Family Engagement Family Advocates is piloted at 6 elementary schools.
- 2012 – United In Action disbands.
- 2014 – The Office of Family Engagement and Equity begins to take shape in BUSD with expanded staffing
- 2017 – Moving away from small schools and academies, Berkeley High begins its universal 9th grade redesign process following school board approval.
- 2019 – Cathy Campbell ends tenure as president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers
- REALM charter school loses its charter.
- The Red For Ed action at the state capitol in Sacramento draws thousands of people to lobby state legislators for more funding, with the support of the BUSD board.

Chapter 5: Racialized Debt Under Economic Crisis

Of course we are operating from a place of austerities. And it short circuits any kind of dreaming on possibility. That's where we're at and that's the bigger conversation of public education. And everybody wants to innovate at the micro level and they don't want to innovate at the macro level. Let's really go all out for what real funding could look like or what a real take-all system can look like.

-Cynthia Molina, Parent Education and Development Coordinator, Oakland Unified

Globalization, gentrification, spatial segregation, job market bifurcation, and other social convergences have “created fertile soil in which school choice and privatization have taken root in many urban school districts” (Scott & Holme, 2016, p. 252). Yet in the neoliberal era of education policymaking, questions about “what works” dominates measures of quality and equity as much it reinforces the locus of control. A study of the *cultural political economy* of education and district reform leads to a different set of questions: In what ways do industry, property, and intergovernmental relations influence educational policymaking at the local level? How does the (re)distribution of power and wealth, along race and class lines, shape district reforms? How do policy actors and community stakeholders make sense of the causes and solutions to economic crisis? These questions and findings situated within social, political, economic, and historical trends illuminate the possibility and limits of governance reform in creating more just schools and communities in two California school districts (Anyon, 1997; Rury & Mirel, 1997).

This chapter on the local political economy answers my first research question and sub-question, which ask: *What are the political and historical factors that are associated with two urban districts' current governance models? And how have the politics of crisis shaped the development of these divergent strategies?* Drawing on my conceptual framework of urban governance and crisis-management as well as interview and document analysis, I identify the intergovernmental challenges to “fiscal vitality” and the extent to which a district can reorganize its way out of state finance inequities. Gramscian theories of hegemony and war of maneuver/war of position (Gramsci, 1971), along with the concept of “civic capacity” from urban regime studies (Stone, 2016) illuminate how parastatal fiscal organizations shaped distinct educational trajectories and politics in Berkeley and Oakland.

My findings indicate that state disinvestment, charter laws, and audit culture shaped Oakland’s “urban crisis,” leading to local governance redesign efforts. These attempts by policy entrepreneurs to redesign district governance is a process marked by both coercive and consensus-building events: gradual changes, such as increasing the use of private contracting, occurred alongside more drastic measures, as seen in the 2003 state receivership. Paradoxically, some of the same strategies intended to alleviate the district’s debt have contributed to other financial issues, such as leasing district property to charter school operators and housing developers. Whereas in Berkeley, the district’s pioneering desegregation efforts in 1968 are a source of pride for the self-identified progressive city, where leaders had to find creative ways to continue integration efforts throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s using other variables such as socioeconomic status and residential neighborhood. Berkeley’s ability to “stay in the black” during the Great Recession was a major feat, in part a result of a series of financial decisions that maintained its independence and in part due to the civic capacity shaped by the city’s wealth.

I argue that budget cuts to public schools, the actual practice as well as the looming threat, where audit processes were arbitrary and deeply racialized forms of surveillance. The 2003 state takeover of OUSD created the momentum for privatization through technocratic approaches institutionalized in its portfolio management strategy (I detail the governance redesign in Chapter 6 and the education regimes upholding these changes in Chapter 7). While Oakland Unified was in “perpetual crisis” due to state and local elected officials locating the district as the site of problems in need of fixing through external actors, Berkeley Unified’s collaboration with the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to avoid state takeover granted district leaders the freedom

to focus on more measured approaches to school improvement. Yet BUSD had less external pressure to improve equity.

I begin with an analysis of California policies, including tax reform, charter law, and state receiverships to illuminate how district leaders are confined by economic parameters drawn by state policy and legislation. This is followed by a profile of FCMAT and its role in suspending democratic representation of the OUSD school board in the name of “fiscal mismanagement,” and its different approach with BUSD. Next, I examine the growth of venture philanthropy amid austerity and disinvestment, and then I consider the role of gentrification as a racialized political economic condition contouring the decisions of district leaders in Oakland and Berkeley. This chapter concludes with a discussion and significance of these findings. A cultural political economic analysis illuminates both the influence of political economic factors in structuring the unequal educational terrain (and its market-based strategies) and the critical role that local stakeholders play in shaping governance and politics. The dialectical relationship between structure and agency define opportunity, control, and change in public schools.

The California Context

The financial and political conditions in which BUSD and OUSD operate are significantly impacted by state legislation and policies. California has been at the forefront of charter school and tax reform movements, both of which have led to disinvestment of school districts in direct and indirect ways. Underlying these practices of austerity are ideological struggles for dominance, where commonsense notions of the economic crisis propels privatization while obscuring competing ideas and practices (Hall, 1984). Whereas the State defines the economic and political conditions through legislation and policymaking, which today is an increasingly marketized government sector, civil society is the dynamic sphere where unions, charter advocacy associations, parents, educators, and beyond engage in the sociocultural production of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971).

Proposition 13, passed by voters in 1978, brought drastic cuts to state education spending that districts never recouped, even forty years later, despite many parcel taxes and bond measures. Charter schools changed the playing field in California since 1992 by bringing new political actors and private funding streams into the education sector, drawing on business principles and progressive values to expand exponentially, with other addendums like the 2010 “Parent Trigger” Law. Thus began the competitive relationship between district and charter schools in urban district in serving working class African American, Asian, and Latinx students, where the battle over better learning outcomes was tied to per pupil funding. The 2007 Great Recession further destabilized education finance across a state funding formula dependent on volatile income and sales taxes to supplement property. The Local Control Funding Formula, passed in 2013, was one short-term attempt to address inequity and funding shortages in districts with high low-income, English Learner, and foster youth populations. Despite conservative reports and pundits pointing to increased funding during this time, LCFF was not enough to cover rising cost-of-living expenses and state pensions, among other financial burdens on education workers.

Together, these state policies were the codification of national and global austerity measures that defined neoliberal politics over the last four decades. These factors set the stage for financial and educational crises — bad schools, inequitable learning experiences, and no money — that created a dire need for more funding and new strategies that philanthropy stepped in to fill. These shifted power dynamics from some semblance of democratic, local control, to a concentration of power among business elites with the help of State intervention. Despite pockets of resistance over the decades, neoliberal hegemony was maintained on the premise that “there is no alternative” (TINA), as Conservative British prime minister Margaret Thatcher articulated.

California School Finance and Tax Reform

A crowded room of residents filled a small chamber of the Oakland City Hall on a September evening in 2019 to support a statewide campaign to reform Proposition 13, the nation's first and most influential tax limitation measure. Hosted by the League of Women Voters, the audience in attendance skewed older and whiter, some of whom enthusiastically interjected with their own remarks on the matter. Forty years prior, the Bay Area was home to the conservative resistance among white homeowners the East Bay suburbs of Fremont, Hayward, Milpitas, and San Leandro— just southeast of Berkeley and Oakland — that fueled Proposition 13 in 1978.

Ben Grief, the political director and spokesperson of Evolve Cal, a non-profit founded in 2011 that “organizes high-impact grassroots campaigns to benefit all Californians” (Evolve, 2020), spoke to the dozens of attendees from the lectern. The presentation rattled off stark statistics around the underfunding of public services based on California's regressive tax structure, identifying corporations and the billionaires behind them making large profits, including Disney and the Shell Oil Company. “I put potholes on here because we're in Oakland,” he joked with a crowd that laughed knowingly, “To think that we're the fifth largest economy in the world, but we have people going out in the evening, under the cover of darkness, to fill potholes? Just think about that for a moment. That is not okay. And it's because of this corporate loophole in Prop. 13. If we had this reliable stable revenue coming in for the last 40 years -- these 150 billion dollars statewide -- we wouldn't have problems like that. And we wouldn't need things like that in the future if we support this ballot measure.”

But the infamous “Tax Revolt” that culminated with the 1978 tax reform measure was more than about potholes. It was even beyond anti-government sentiments. At a 1977 conference on Proposition 13, Paul Cobb, a fixture in Oakland's African American community and mayoral appointee to the Oakland school board,³ put it bluntly: “Proposition 13 was White folks' message to us that we are going to have to do it ourselves” (Self, 2015, p. 316). Spearheaded by an apartment landlord-turned politician Howard Jarvis, Proposition 13 cut and capped property taxes for residents and businesses by limiting assessment of commercial and industrial property at one percent. The measure passed with 64.8 percent voter approval. This measure, a key piece of the 1970s “tax revolt,” adversely affected land use, housing, and new investment, and drastically cut revenue for cities, counties, and schools. Consequently, California dropped from the “gold standard” of public education funding in the 1960s and early 1970s to 41st among all states⁴ in 2015-2016 (Kaplan, 2017). Long-time Berkeley resident and founder of the Berkeley Public Schools Fund Mary Friedman explained the drastic changes she saw at her child's elementary school in the years following Proposition 13:

There had been a school nurse that was there twice a week. There had been an art resource teacher, a music resource teacher that came into every class every week, even a couple times a week. It was just a fabulous program that each year after '78 got cut more and more and more. Then, the smaller schools were closed. There were three small schools that were closed. The teachers went out on strike. You just felt it. Every year it was with less money and less money.

From one year to the next, the education funding from local property taxes was cut by more than half its budget: \$4.6 million in 1977 to \$1.9 billion in after Prop. 13 passed in 1978 (CA Dept of

³ Who strongly resisted the state takeover of OUSD in 2003.

⁴ After adjusting for differences in the cost of living in each state.

Finance, 2020). Further, this flipped school finance system essentially weakened “voters’ political will to tax themselves” with a higher voter approval threshold for bond measures (“8.1 Spending,” n.d.).

Education funding in California prior to Proposition 13 functioned as it currently does in the rest of the country in that it was largely based on local property taxes, and therefore, inequitable. Wealthier districts, particularly suburbs, could fund high quality schools. This is something that the *Serrano v. Priest* (1971) tried to remedy, as did a dozen of state and U.S. Supreme court cases found throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but relying on the state to offset unequal local finance systems led to more challenges. Self’s analysis of the tax revolt and Black Power in Oakland situated the problems of unequal development within the history of converging political economic conditions centered on California’s property markets, postwar suburbanization, and urban underdevelopment (2005, p. 317). Similarly, I argue that the financial and academic crisis facing urban districts is directly connected to Proposition 13 and other racialized political economic events that sit at the intersection of gentrification, state finance, and philanthropic-led policy entrepreneurialism.

On May 22, 2019, while the Berkeley Federation of Teachers was still in contract negotiations and the Oakland Education Association was just months out from their fervent six-day strike, tens of thousands attended a Red for Ed lobbying day at the state capitol in Sacramento. What was originally a planned lobby day for the two major unions, NEA-affiliated California Educators Association and AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers, was rebranded as part of “Red For Ed” in response to the wildcat teachers strikes across the country. Chants like “Don’t stop! Don’t hate! California is a union state!” filled the state capitol rotunda packed with a sea of red shirts and banners. In an event with mostly White people, which took place in the middle of the work day, one banner draped over the balcony read, “Defend East Oakland Schools: Charter co-location = gentrification” with a brown fist and face of youth of color hugging an outline of their school buildings. In the months leading up to the event, 75 Oakland principals signed an open letter and met with state lawmakers to advocate for increased funding for schools, cancelling their district \$36 million-dollar debt, and fixing the state’s charter school law (Rios, 2019; Principals from OUSD, 2019). Their letter read:

The single biggest obstacle to allowing teachers to be fairly compensated is our state’s inability to prioritize investment in education. According to the National Education Association, California spent only \$10,420 per pupil in 2018, which is below the national average of \$11,934. In high cost-of-living states that invest in education, the per pupil expenditures were more than double California’s – \$21,118 in New Jersey, \$21,731 in Connecticut, and \$23,519 in New York. By contrast, California continues to top the nation in prison spending. If our education budget is a reflection of our values, then we are morally bankrupt when it comes to our children.

However, these ideals did not permeate upwards to the OUSD central office, nor to most of its school board. In comparison, the organizing efforts were even more widespread in Berkeley Unified thanks to advocacy from a unified school board and its powerful unions. The district made attendance voluntary that day, and even provided buses for transportation for the two-hour drive to the state capitol. Cathy Campbell, Berkeley Federation of Teacher (BFT) president, attributed the district support for the action to the school board directors, all of whom wore red t-shirts in support of Red For Ed during the board meeting that week. The BUSD board had already issued a statement calling for more pressure to increase state funding prior to the Red For Ed Rally, which BFT reminded them of when they sent in a request for solidarity on May 22nd:

I don't think the superintendent was happy about it. I know the assistant sup wasn't happy about it. It caused a lot of consternation at schools. It turned out fine, which I knew it would. They took efforts to decrease student attendance in order to avoid situations they felt like were unsafe. But our board members were very supportive of them. They spoke publicly about that. And three of them came. And I don't think that was the case for most of the unions there. And I attribute that to their own principles and their own smartness because, like me and our union, they try to really understand what's the root of this problem.

Similar to teacher activists' attitudes across the country, Berkeley school board locates state funding as the "root" of the problem, in part with some pressure from its influential teachers union (see more on the BFT's endorsement process in Chapter 7). BUSD board director Julie Sinai was quoted in the Daily Cal newspaper describing how "inspiring" it was to attend the rally at "the State Capitol with teachers, staff and board members from across the state demanding full and fair funding for public education," pointing out that "our students and staff that pay the price" in struggling to "keep pace with the cost of quality education" (Finman, 2019).

Political mobilization for economic redistribution has been years in the making. Long before the sleek campaign materials, a progressive coalition of elected leaders, and billionaires like Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg bankrolling the 2020 "Schools and Communities" ballot initiative, the fight for full and fair education funding was sparked at the grassroots. In 2011, Occupy Wall Street brought thousands of people to the streets to demand a just economy for the people as opposed to profits for the "1 percent." Occupy Cal demonstrations harkened back to the Free Speech Movement, while Occupy Oakland coincided with protests against police brutality, incited by the killing of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old African-American man, by a transit police officer on New Year's Day 2009. This movement was also a critical conjecture for education issues, where once-siloed parents, educators, and community members started to join forces around a Leftist ad-hoc union caucus, Classroom Struggle. Analysts have deemed this "the perfect storm of class struggle" (Uetrict, 2019) from the growing militancy of labor unions, as epitomized in the education realm by the CTU strike of 2012, to politicians at the local and national level strongly rejecting neoliberal policies and gross wealth inequality, most notably culminating in Bernie Sanders' candidacy for president in 2016. These events, along with the vestiges of the Great Recession, made it possible a few years later to garner mass support for a campaign to "close the corporate loophole" and generate \$5 billion a year for public schools in California (Evolve, 2020).

Lessons from previous economic downturns also heeded warnings about the problems with the tax structure and market instability. When the stock market crashed in 2008, California took much longer to come out of that recession than other states that rely on property taxes from commercial properties because California's reliance on income taxes has created more volatile economic conditions (Warner, 2016; PPIC, 2019). Like Grief from Evolve CA warned the concerned citizens back in September: "When we do have another stock market crash, which we're going to have at some point, we're going to fall farther than other states, and it's going to take us a longer time to climb out of that."

Charter Laws, State Advocacy, and "Equitable Allocation"

Charter legislation is critical to understanding portfolio districts because much of central office restructuring and budget cuts is related to enrollment loss when families leave the district to attend charter schools. In 1992, California legislature enacted the second charter school law in the country, following Minnesota, that was introduced by State Senator Gary Hart and other lawmakers

through the Charter Schools Act (Senate Bill 1448). Like many other charter advocates at the time, Senator Hart was motivated by charter schools' potential for innovation and change. Despite "contentious" pushback from unions to protect collective bargaining within the charter law, Hart defended his position 26 years later, "I refused to budge. My position was that there needed to be a choice for teachers whether to form a union at a charter school" (Fensterwald, 2018). While loosening labor restrictions was a key piece of the legislation, it also altered the democratic character of school governance. Non-profit and for-profit charter school operators replaced democratically-elected school board members with an appointed board. Further, new interest groups would go head to head with state teachers unions, particularly the California Charter School Association (CCSA), and eventually surpass them in campaign funding (Bollag & Ho, 2018). CCSA, along with national organizations like Teach For America and the Gates, Broad, and Walton Family Foundation, changed power dynamics and influenced education policy in Sacramento.

The more that these emergent policy actors lobbied for charter school expansion and public tax dollars, the more influential the industry grew in California politics. Whereas the original law capped the number of charter schools statewide at 100, with no more than ten per district (Los Angeles Unified was the exception with twenty), the state legislature in 1998 raised the limit to 250 charter schools, and then an additional 100 in each following year. Today, California has more charter schools and a larger charter school enrollment than any other state (Zinshteyn, 2017), with more than 1,275 charter schools serving nearly 630,300 students – approximately 1 out of 10 students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2019). Far from Al Shanker's⁵ vision of innovation labs for school districts to learn from, charters schools have proliferated across the state due to an authorization process that requires charters "must be approved" if they qualify (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Fensterwald, 2019; Fuller, 2000). And charter management organizations (CMOs) that originated in California like KIPP, Aspire Public Schools, and Green Dot, have since spread nationally. And yet, their continuous growth has begun to plateau, along with their decades-long momentum. Neoliberal think tanks, like the Center for Reforming Public Education (CRPE), have cautioned about the declining enrollment patterns in the Bay Area in particular, advising the "mature charter sector" on how to develop "strategies for dealing with hostile local political backlash to charter growth" (2018, p. 2).

Facilities have been a major challenge for charter school operators who have to use their operating budgets for property mortgage or rent, and therefore, securing sites for their schools from local school districts has been a key point of contestation (part of the original design from charter advocates). For these reasons, CCSA seeks to "to secure and retain long term, high-quality, affordable school space" for charter schools "through aggressive advocacy" (CCSA, 2018). A major win for charter proponents took place in 2000 when voters approved Proposition 39, which mandated "that public school facilities should be shared fairly among all public school pupils, including those in charter schools" (Education Code Section 47614). This was a smaller, but critical piece of the larger proposition, which was primarily an amendment to Proposition 13's supermajority requirement that lowered the public approval of local bond measures from 66 to 55 percent (League of Women Voters of California, 2001). Spearheaded by the California Teachers Association (NEA-affiliated) to more easily fund district facilities, this was the second attempt after Proposition 26 failed earlier that year, which led them to team up with venture capitalists Ann and

⁵ Shanker renounced the charter movement as a "gimmick" just five years later, writing "Vouchers, charter schools, for-profit management schemes are all quick fixes that won't fix anything" (Kahlenberg, 2009).

John Doerr, John T. Walton, and Reed Hastings⁶ to bankroll the campaign on the compromise around charter school facilities. This opened the door for co-locations, where charter and district-run schools operate out of the same building but divided by floor. In 2002, Assembly Bill 14 created the Charter School Facilities Program within the California Department of Education to further support charter schools accessing state facility funding, providing annual assistance with facilities rent and lease expenditures (split 50 percent grant and 50 percent loan). The Program's move from the CDE and to the California School Finance Authority's administration has resulted in an increase of funding to charter schools from \$47 million in 2011-12 to \$137 million in 2018-19. According to the CSFA's website, "the passage of Propositions 47, 55, 1D and 51, \$1.4 billion has been made available for the new construction of charter school facilities or the rehabilitation of existing school district facilities for charter school use."

Moreover, the campaign rhetoric also spurred the equity language prevalent in portfolio advocacy today (discussed in Chapter 7). Previously, school districts only offered unused space to charter school operators. Under Proposition 39, students who attend a charter school in their district are now guaranteed to have furnished and equipped facilities that are "reasonably equivalent" to the other district buildings. In a move towards supporting charter schools, then-President of the CTA Wayne Johnson claimed in 2000 that charter schools were left with the districts "leftovers" and that "They ought to be entitled to facilities that are adequate. It's just a matter of equity." And yet, even charter-friendly elected officials foresaw the pressures this would amount to on the ground. Noel Gallo, who sat on the OUSD board (1992-2012) with backing from the California Charter Schools Association and was instrumental in opening the first charter school in his area, told local media that the district would be "hard-pressed" to find any space for more requests for charter facilities:

"It does put an additional burden on a public school system already struggling with the current situation," Gallo said. "Our directive has been . . . we'll support you. But you have to acquire your own site and the expenses that go along with it." (Lynam, 2000)

Another OUSD board member Jean Quan⁷ told the media that this will force boards and district administrators to weigh decisions to grant charters more carefully than they had previously done:

"It's all going to make people more serious about granting charter schools," she said. "Charter schools have problems with facilities, but because it wasn't our problem, we would grant them. Now, can we be so liberal with someone who may not have a good track record?"

However, the OUSD board and state administrator did, in fact, continue to be quite liberal in approving charter schools, tripling the number of charter schools over the next decade.

As the influence of philanthropists in public policy has deepened since the 1980s, what Thompkins named "policy patrons" (2016), the mid-2000s saw new strategies of venture philanthropy, focusing on parent mobilization via Education Reform Advocacy Organizations (ERAOs). ERAOs are 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s, and political action committees that mobilize and fund parents behind school reform issues at the district and state levels, particularly around market-

6 During this time, Hastings was appointed to the State Board of Education (2000-2009) by Gov. Gray Davis, but then resigned when Democratic legislators challenged his advocacy of more English instruction and language testing for non-English-speaking students (Hamilton, 2006).

7 Jean Quan went on to become Mayor of Oakland in 2011, the first Asian American female mayor in the country.

oriented reforms like charter schools. Parent Revolution, founded in 2005, was key in California's 2010 Parent Empowerment Act ("Parent Trigger") by mobilizing many migrant, Latinx parents to change the administration of their poorly performing public schools as a new strategy for charter school conversion through legal maneuvers (Lubienski et al., 2012). Parent Trigger legislation has garnered significant philanthropic support and media attention, even spawning a Hollywood movie, *Won't Back Down* (2012), that tells the story of two mothers who work together to turnaround their children's failing urban school in spite of the protective, bureaucratic teachers' union. ERAOs were key to this legislation, and again, the changing of power players at the national and state level increased their influence in local education matters (see discussion of local ERAOs in Chapter 7). ERAOs like Parent Revolution, the 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now, and Democrats for Education Reform differ from traditional parent engagement models of "voluntarism" in that their model of systemic change has moved towards "advocacy" and "empowerment" (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012, p. 12).

This tension between opposing interest groups has mounted into major spending for political campaigns. For example, \$50 million were spent on the 2018 state superintendent race - surpassing that of most US senate races (Cohen, 2018). In a surprise upset, union-backed Tony Thurmond narrowly beat out Marshall Tuck, supported by the charter school industry via the EdVoice for the Kids PAC funded by Netflix CEO Reed Hastings, philanthropist Eli Broad, Gap retail founder Doris Fisher, and the Waltons, the Walmart company heirs (Bollag & Ho, 2018). Moreover, the CCSA candidate for California governor, and fierce charter proponent as LA mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, lost to Gavin Newsom in the most expensive gubernatorial race in state history (Cohen, 2018).

Once the frontier of charter expansion, California is now leading the calls for charter regulation. In August 2018, Governor Jerry Brown signed the AB-406 banning new for-profit charters, three years after he vehemently opposed and then vetoed a similar bill in 2015 (Vasquez Heilig, 2018). At the time, five for-profit groups operated around 35 schools serving 35,000 students statewide and had very poor outcomes; California Virtual Academies, the largest online charter network in the state, had a four-year average graduation rate of only 36 percent compared to 78 percent for California as a whole (In the Public Interest, 2015). In a stark contrast to their strong opposition to previous bills, CCSA posted a celebratory message on their website:

"With support from CCSA, the Governor sent a clear message today: There's no room for profits in public education." said Jed Wallace, president and CEO, CCSA. "Charter schools are an integral part of California's public school system. We are thrilled that our state has embraced a thriving charter school sector that is public, free, open to all, and 100 percent operated by non-profit organizations." (CCSA, 2018)

However, CCSA was less enthusiastic about assembly bills 1505 and 1506, which brought more power to districts by limiting county and the state boards that overrule charter renewal decisions and put a cap on the number of charter schools in the state, respectively. Both passed on May 22, 2019 with support from not only the two major teachers unions, CTA and CFT, but from the California School Boards Association and superintendents across the state. At the hearing before the vote, advocates urged legislators that AB 1505 is "more democratic by giving local districts more control over the schools that operate within their boundaries" (Ingram, 2019).

Post-Recession Finance Landscape: Rising Costs and Alternative Revenue Sources

The Great Recession cut deep into school districts' budgets across the country, but because Proposition 13 has meant state finance is based on income and sales taxes, it has taken even longer for California funding to stabilize. California's funding per student in 2015 was still below 2008 levels by 5.8% (Leachman et al., 2017). However, there are many other hidden costs that have risen over the years, from expanded special education services to increasing retirement pensions to skyrocketing costs of living. This is parallel to a "silent recession," as one district budget officer explained in a 2018 WestED report:

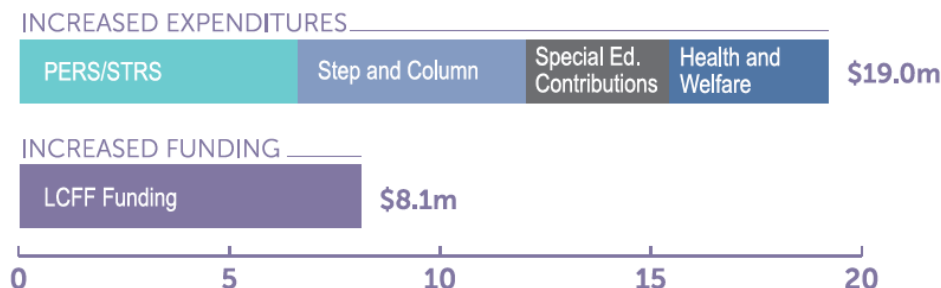
"[I]t's exactly this silent recession scenario... though we are receiving more dollars each year per student, the costs that we're being saddled with are greater than those revenues. So, we end up in a perpetual cutting mode." (Krausen & Willis, 2018, p. 4).

As one attempt to restore education funding to the pre-recession budget-cut levels of the last decade, Governor Jerry Brown signed the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013. LCFF is a *weighted funding formula* designed to allocate funding to schools based on certain "need" characteristics of each school's student population (Baker et al., 2015, p. 426). In this case, LCFF redirected state funds towards low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. It also mandates that each district design a three-year community engagement plan around the process, called the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Many cities and states have experimented with weight-funding policies since the 1990s, and they have been hailed by advocates as advancing an equity-oriented finance lens by focusing on the most underserved students. Statewide groups like Californians for Justice along with local organizations like Youth Together have organized youth around the LCFF campaign's advocacy arm. However, school finance scholars have found that state lawmakers have relied on redistributed funding without increasing the total amount to an adequate level (Baker et al., 2015). In other words, concentrating funds does not replace the fact that school districts do not have enough money to start off with. Moreover, these policies have been conflated with a broad package of strategies that includes school governance decentralization and school choice, where the new funding models can more easily "follow" students to charter school (Baker & Elmer 2009).

In addition to LCFF, the state has increased other spending by upwards of \$8 million in some districts. However, Board directors argued that "gains in state funding have mostly been illusory," education spending has skyrocketed. School board directors in Berkeley and Oakland argue that the state is punting rising costs onto districts that are bearing the brunt of new funding mandates. In June 2017, the state increased funding to local districts by about \$1.3 billion and then passed \$1 billion worth of mandated payments on to districts, which includes paying into employee pension funds, CalPERS and CalSTRS, and special education contributions (Krausen & Willis, 2018).

Figure 1. Increased pension expenditures outpace LCFF revenue increases in some districts

For this sample school district in 2017-18 (San Bernardino Unified), salary-related expenditure increases will outpace LCFF revenue increases by \$10.9 million.



Source: Authors' representation of data provided by the San Bernardino Unified School District

Two BUSD directors, Judy Appel and Ty Alper, published an op-ed explaining how lawmakers in Sacramento are not accounting for the following areas: salaries, benefits and pensions, ADA/Special education costs, and the accurate adjustments for the rising costs of living. In this statement, they point to contradiction of state lawmakers coupling an increase in spending for school with rising mandated costs:

As local school board members, we feel this dynamic acutely. It is heartbreaking to know what we need to do to close our opportunity and achievement gaps and yet simply not have enough money to do it. In Berkeley, we have been getting more dollars from the state, but virtually all of them have to go right back to our mandated costs, which are projected to continue rising. Like districts across the state, Berkeley's school district had to make substantial, painful cuts this year even though, on paper, the state gave us more money. (DailyCal, 2018).

The state appeared to increase per pupil K-12 spending in 2017, which legislators celebrated as a straightforward win, but with districts paying most of the difference, access to programs and services to improve the quality of education has not changed for students. OUSD Board director Shanthi Gonzales echoed the inequitable weight of new state funding mandates. Whereas wealthier districts have enough savings in their reserve to buy them some time to restructure their budgets, there is no reserve to "cushion the blow" in districts like Oakland:

The state tripled our pension costs without any new funding to deal with that. In a district like Castro Valley that has a 14% reserve, they have time. It gives them a cushion to have time to make gradual adjustments. And here we struggled to maintain our 2% reserve, and so we don't have any cushions to cushion the blow because the state says, "Hey, district increase your pension contributions triple them in six or seven years." So basically 2% or 3% per year. We don't have 2% of our budget laying around because basically we're going from eight cents on every dollar of payroll to 22 cents on every dollar of payroll. We don't have a reserve to be able to just pay more money to the state. That means we have to cut something else.

These state decisions have pressured Oakland in recent years where budget cuts, and its detrimental effects, dominate conversations on the ground.

Superintendents have also joined demands to state officials about the underfunding of public education. Prior to the 2018 election, superintendents in Alameda County, including OUSD Superintendent Kyla Johnson Trammell and BUSD Superintendent Donald Evans, signed an open letter to the future governor that outlined the importance of investing in education as a way to fix other issues, like healthcare and crime, to ensure that California continues to be “a leading contributor to the world economy.” They described the paradox of increased funding alongside mandates as “giving with one hand and taking with the other” without moving the needle on student achievement. They did not mince words:

These costs are frequently counted and referenced by legislators as if we have those dollars to spend on teaching and learning... when, in reality, we do not. [...] We want you to take responsibility with us for educating the children of California, and we will not wait quietly for that to happen. We will band together, and we will rally our communities to join us to speak up and speak out. We will support a new governor who shows leadership; one who seeks partnership. And we will loudly oppose anyone who is not willing to make the children of this state their highest priority.

School districts have few revenue options: parent fundraising, parcel taxes, and construction bonds. In order to make up for the loss of state funding, there were 430 revenue measures on the ballot across California in 2016 alone, while PTA's and private foundations raise over \$600 million every year for schools (Evolve CA, 2020). Both parcel taxes and construction bonds are short-term solutions that require consistent voter approval every few years. They also widen the gap between districts by local wealth, furthering to inequitable funding conditions.

As might be expected, support for parcel taxes is higher in wealthier districts, which have more disposable income to spend on schools. Median household income averages more than \$85,000 in districts with parcel taxes, compared with about \$60,000 in districts that have never proposed a parcel tax. Furthermore, 44 percent of districts with median household incomes in the top 10 percent have passed parcel taxes, compared with just 7 percent of districts with median household incomes in the bottom 90 percent. Districts with parcel taxes have fewer low-income students, English Learners, and students of color. Districts that have passed parcel taxes are also more likely to be smaller and have fewer school-age children per household; these districts can propose lower parcel taxes and get the same benefit, since the revenue is distributed among fewer students.

To summarize, the budget constraints impacting urban public schools are the culmination of dropping property values following deindustrialization and the Great Recession, along with shifts in school equity funding and increased school choice options. However, even as urban centers experience increased economic prosperity following revitalization efforts and the national economy strengthens, the majority of states in 2015 were still providing less total school funding per student than they were in 2008 (Leachman, Masterson, & Figueroa, 2017). From the rise in marketization and privatization of education and other social policies emerges a new common sense about the limited options districts have to fill this dire need for resources, thus leaving many local policy actors to turn to *public-private partnerships* (Ball, 2012; DiMartino, 2014).

Together, laws and policies at the state-level define charter school expansion, tax revenue, and other costs that districts have to take on. This background sheds light on the instability that

ensued in urban district, and why it impacted Oakland so much more than Berkeley. Bringing together political economic analysis to understand local politics complicates the district “problems” that philanthropy seeks to fill. A Gramscian analysis leads us to consider why certain district leaders, particularly those in urban communities, left with a constrained selection of policy options to choose from. The cultural political economy of education reform in California set the scene for creative financing, public-private partnerships, and other forms of private donations from more affluent families, and consequently deepened the long-existing inequity in urban school districts like Berkeley and Oakland.

The Politics of Audit Surveillance

The historical context of education politics in Berkeley and Oakland illuminate the complex web of governance amongst various policy actors. The founding of the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) in 1991 was pivotal in shaping district politics in a paradigmatic shift that gave these new independent, yet state-mandated agencies fiscal control of local governments, such as municipalities and school districts. The state takeover of Oakland Unified in 2003 created a policy window that spurred private contracting among its public schools, manufacturing a political moment that suspended democratic participation under fiscal crisis. Meanwhile, Berkeley Unified faced similar challenges with FCMAT around the same times, but ultimately staved off the threat of any draconian measures due to its civic capacity that is buoyed by university support. The racialized targeting of urban districts is a part of a longer legacy of ghetto schooling (Anyon, 1997; Clark, 1965).

Oakland

Debt, Disinvestment, and Interracial Politics

Following the Free Speech, Anti-War, Black Power, Chicano, Third World Liberation, and other social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, activists turned to electoral strategies in the 1980s. Leaders from the Black Panther Party took different paths, from Bobby Seales’ run for mayor as a Democrat to more radical wings that rejected cooptation (Self, 2005). Political power meant more access to unionized, public sector jobs as well as small business contracts with the City, which brought stability and opportunity for Oakland’s African American community, peaking at 46% of the city’s population in 1980 (Kuruvila, 2011). There were more African Americans in leadership positions in Oakland Unified, most prominently Marcus Foster, who was recruited from Philadelphia in 1970 to become the country’s first African American superintendent of a large school district thanks to the political pressure from the Black Caucus and other political groups (Spencer, 2012). But these new politicians of color inherited a disinvested city and a burgeoning crack cocaine epidemic (NNICC, 1987).

Periods of economic crisis catalyzed the portfolio strategy in Oakland in the 2000s, a period that was shaped by neoliberal policy shifts at the state level as well as the racial politics of a diverse, working-class city with Black leadership since the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to the state takeover of OUSD in 2003, there was a lesser known struggle that occurred 15 years earlier in 1988. This attempt, however, was unsuccessful because leaders on the school board looked to alternatives despite pressure from state and local officials to give up local oversight. Board director Greg Hodges and allies had to think outside the box to challenge the loan, according to Kitty Kelly Epstein:

8 Oakland Black labor history: Sleeping car porters, longshoremen

At the next meeting after this big blowup of the parents in the hills and all that, there was another school board meeting, and the state came and said, "We've got your 10 million dollar loan to give you that you have to have because you don't have a balanced budget." Sylvester got up and said, "No, actually, we don't need your 10 million dollars. We've found another way to finance our debt." They had gone and got something called "certificates of participation," which had been used by other public agencies before but they had never been used by a school district. They arranged a loan, which of course they didn't tell Sheila or any of the people who were conspiring against them. And Guthrie from Cal, Honig, and all these people had a total fit and said it was illegal and they couldn't do it. [The board] said, "No, it's totally legal, we know we've already got the money in hand so you don't need to worry about it. Keep your 10 million dollars." They kept control of the district. This lasted for 15 more years.

According to Kelly Epstein, the racially diverse school board "never got any credit" for the positive work they had done because the daily newspaper was always "on the side of the old boys." She explained:

This is the period of time during which they passed the Ebonics Resolution, they rejected the Houghton Mifflin social studies textbooks, they started diversifying the teaching force and demanding reports from personnel at every meeting to tell them who they'd hired and what ethnicity they were. Because they're a school board, they couldn't still make wonderful schools, but they eliminated tracking. I had a student at the time who was taking teacher ed classes from me and he went and proposed a resolution to end tracking in the Oakland schools, and they took him up and passed it. But, of course, there's still GATE and special ed and stuff they couldn't get out of, but this official policy that Oakland had had since Lewis Terman of tracking the entire district, that was gone. They did a bunch of wonderful things.

Despite these accomplishments, the district garnered negative press from patronage and corruption scandals; a 1991 Los Angeles Times article framed OUSD as "long plagued by well-publicized financial difficulties, charges of corruption among employees and dismal dropout rates and achievement test scores" (Merl, 1991).

Not long after 1988 debacle, FCMAT was formed in 1991 by state legislative action through AB 1200 (FCMAT, 2020). FCMAT is a "public management assistance organization" formed to support troubled school districts identify and solve fiscal problems. Prior to serving on the Oakland school board in 1998, Dan Siegel worked as an attorney for OUSD's general council when the Richmond Unified School District⁹ went bankrupt in 1991 (Timar, 2004). He described his involvement in the series of events:

A group of attorneys challenged that in court. And it included lawyers from Public Advocates, a non-profit, and Morrison & Forrester volunteered. [...] And then I persuaded the board to let me join the case on behalf of the Oakland school district because we had an interest in whether a district could be closed because they ran out of money. And the interest of course was that the children would suffer, not the adults who would run out of money.

⁹ Later combined with other districts and renamed West Contra Costa Unified.

They brought the *Butt v. State* (1992) case to the Contra Costa County Superior Court, where the judge agreed with the plaintiffs that this constituted denial of the rights of the students, and ordered the state to provide money to keep the district open. In response, the state legislature provided the bail out followed by the FCMAF legislation, led by Elihu Harris, an African American state assemblyman-turned-mayor, who sought to uncover any fiscal discrepancies in the district budget. This was the beginning of state involvement in Oakland governance and finance, which set the standard that loans from the state would trigger state receivership for districts. External audits prompted a state trustee in Oakland to oversee the budget while the superintendent still ran the district's daily operations until the mid-1990s. This was a new strategy in urban district governance that was gaining traction, and resistance, in states across the country beginning in New Jersey. Once again, FCMAF was called in to audit the "floundering" district in 1999, and their report described Oakland Unified as having a "flawed operational philosophy" which has "further exacerbated the ineffective functioning of the district" (1999, p. 10). It argues that "the district may want to consider outsourcing other maintenance and operations services" based on the performance of "considerable savings for the district" resulting from the OUSD's reliance on private contractors for energy management" (FCMAF, 1999, p. 22).

FCMAF accelerated neoliberal paternalism in California, mirroring the national pattern that most districts that underwent state or mayoral receivership had African American-majority communities and elected leadership. This is in line with the scholarship that finds that the role of race and politics was a more significant factor than academic achievement in districts that have undergone state receivership (Morel, 2018). Oakland at the time was racially diverse, but had a larger Black population with strong representation in politics. State auditors were believed to have been honing in on "urban" districts more than others. Residents and elected officials alike, including OUSD board director Shanthi Gonzales, expressed this racialized power dynamic in news articles, op-eds, forums, and in interviews:

We have folks in Sacramento who have sort of racist attitudes toward Oakland that they just feel like because the problems here have been so persistent for so long. I think a lot of folks in Sacramento just think of us as a lost cause full of incompetent people and so I think that Oakland is not always treated in the same way that another district would be treated that was experiencing similar problems. That's what I would say.

Seigel, who went on to become board director after working on OUSD's general counsel, was also critical of FCMAF:

These are basically the guys with the green eye shades. I never felt any kind of compassion or concern from them about our children. It was all about balancing the budget. It's like the World Bank going into Brazil or someplace and saying, "Well you want our money, you're going to have to stop giving the people healthcare and free education and raise taxes and let the multinationals do what they want."

And former OUSD interim superintendent Robert Blackburn, who was badly wounded in 1973 during the assassination of his friend and colleague, Superintendent Marcus Foster, recalled the harm that the state takeover caused the school system and the city: "State Superintendent O'Connell treated Oakland 'like an absentee landlord with slum properties,' and that the upheaval caused an exodus of families from district schools" (Murphy, 2009).

State intervention in the district was happening concurrently with demographic shifts in Oakland. By the 1990s, the quickly growing Latinx and Asian populations were building power in

the political sphere where African Americans had made major inroads in the decades prior. Across California, debates surrounded bilingual education versus English-only education as well as the legitimacy of Ebonics. Beyond programs and policies, districts are sites of employment (Shipps, 2004). The fight for school reform was inextricably linked with job competition. Language education was a proxy for larger debates about race and ethnicity as the growing Latino and Asian immigrant populations were situated to compete with African Americans for resource allocation. OUSD eventually fused the Title I Office led by African-Americans with the Latinx-led Bilingual Office. The fear of an external audit and the reality that the state was withholding five million dollars from OUSD for non-compliance eventually motivated the long-divided staff.

However, no organizational coherence would buffer Oakland Unified from stronger political forces that grew influential under the neoliberal reform era. More powerful interests, from state officials to intermediary organizations to philanthropists, set their eyes on Oakland. State politicians' interest in Oakland's financial and political matters stirred turmoil for the school board. One of the stipulations of Superintendent Mesa's contract was full responsibility over personnel, meaning that the school board was not to interfere with the site appointments. The school board eventually conceded, and this trade-off was a recurrent point of contention. With full authority over principal hiring and placement, Superintendent Mesa aggravated a highly political school board. Meaning that many of the directors went on to higher political office or other political leadership positions, most notably Sheila Jordan, former Alameda County Superintendent of Schools from 1999 until 2014. Allies in education turned to bitter enemies in the years that followed.

The State Takeover and Oakland's "Education Mayor"

Long-standing tensions around public oversight and democratic engagement in district affairs reached a new low when republican Governor Gray Davis signed Senate Bill 39 in 2003, which initiated a state receivership that replaced democratically-elected officials with a state administrator, Randolph Ward, trained by the Broad Superintendents Institute. The short story is that OUSD underwent state receivership due to a district budget deficit of \$35 million dollars. However, the exact cause of the deficit is as unclear and contentious as locating the actual amount of debt, or why a 100-million-dollar loan was necessary for the district to taken on. There are many takes on what went wrong: financial mismanagement between district leaders and the county office of education in the latter's move towards a new budgeting system; Superintendent Chaconas' ambitious plan to raise teacher's wages and staff every single empty teaching position; political infighting between an overreaching mayor and a popular superintendent; and the rise of FCMAT.

Jerry Brown had returned to local politics after taking time between two tenures as governors, and had his sights set on being an "education mayor" in Oakland when he was elected in 2000 (Wong, 2011). He made strides in consolidating power through three simultaneous strategies: 1) founding two charter schools, 2) attempting mayoral control, and 3) appointing three members to the school board, expanding it from seven to ten, including his campaign accountant. Former board president, David Kakishiba explained the politics leading up to the takeover,

Jerry [Brown] wanted full control, which I think the concept of mayoral control was just beginning to be a big deal nationally. He wanted full control but he couldn't get support for that so then he got a compromise to get three appointees to the 7-member board making it a 10-member board. He did not go to the voters for a signature drive for that, he did it legislatively though the city council, and it barely passed. He got on the ballot, overwhelmingly won, and then that created a highly factionalized governing body for the district. There was an intense battle for control of who had the majority votes on, and ultimately it centered around who was going to be the superintendent.

The purpose of the commission to legitimize the mayor's efforts to control the schools by institutionalizing charter schools, mayoral control, the mayoral appointees to the board, strategies that were gaining traction around the country at that time (Morel, 2018). Jerry Brown's desire to takeover and reconstruct schools came from his own educational background, according to Siegel:

I always tell people this: if you want to understand Jerry Brown, that the place where it starts is that he's a Jesuit. To me it's kind of contradictory, because as a Jesuit, he was very committed to helping the poor and powerless as long as they were the deserving poor and powerless. [...] But the other side of Jesuitism is very harsh, punitive approach to people who are bad.

Brown founded two charter schools, under his tenure as mayor, the Oakland Military Institute and Oakland School for the Arts in 2001 and 2002, respectively.

As one local reporter put it, "Jerry Brown is Oakland's pitchman and [State Senator] Don Perata its banker" (Thompson, 2001). The two combined were a powerful force in Oakland politics and set their sights on getting Brown's city manager, George Musgrove, to become interim and eventually permanent superintendent (Kaminsky, 2007). Some saw this as a conspiracy by the mayor to push out former superintendent Carol Quan around an odd charge: for installing security cameras to track down stolen without putting out that \$28,000 contract to bid. As I detail in the next chapter, the mismanagement under the portfolio is much worse with little consequences. Ultimately, they wanted to get rid of her, and succeeded. However, instead of hiring the mayor's left-hand man, the board selected popular, long-time OUSD educator and principal Dennis Chaconas, a move that triggered many of the political problems that would unfold for the district in the 2000's. Chaconas reflected on that contentious time as OUSD superintendent "over the objections of Don Perata and Jerry Brown. Neither one wanted me." A self-identified "teaching superintendent," he rebuked the "business manager" type of superintendency:

[Jerry Brown] had an understanding that George [Musgrove] was more of a businessman than an educator. And unfortunately, many mayors see the school system as a means to their ends and not an end in and of itself of what the education is really a vibrant component of a quality community.

Chaconas was known as a popular, energetic leader who was, as Siegel put it, "famous and beloved in the district." Many board members felt a deep loyalty to Superintendent Chaconas, whose instructional vision as a longtime OUSD educator and native Oaklander earned him the admiration of many of his peers, constituents, and staff. From his viewpoint as a newly-minted school board member at the time, Gary Yee described the state takeover as a "low point" in his career. The current focus on maintaining a financial reserve in the districts' budget echoes earlier challenges in 2003 around district spending and state finance which left OUSD leaders treading dangerously close to going under receivership. Whatever the exact combinations of factors caused the deficit, the crisis surrounding the reserve created a sense of urgency about finding money as well as finger pointing about who was to blame for the financial mess.

One alternative was to borrow the money from facilities bonds, something their private legal counsel along with superintendents across the state considered legitimate collateral for a short-term loan. However, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Sheila Jordan sided with state leaders in Sacramento like Don Perata, who had sponsored a bill in 1999 requiring the OUSD superintendent to submit an audit by FCMA^T at the end of the year for \$750,000 (AB 1115). When the OUSD

administration proposed covering the shortfall with construction funds, they were challenged by FCMAT:

Tom Henry, the CEO of California's Fiscal Crisis and Management Team (FCMAT) opposed this plan, and Mayor Brown questioned it heavily. (During a state takeover, FCMAT would be responsible for monitoring the school district's financial progress.) Phone records later obtained by the Oakland Tribune revealed over 40 phone calls on key dates between Brown, Henry, and Randolph Ward, who would end up in charge of OUSD when it was placed under state control, in the two months before the state takeover. (Gammon, 2003)

Once the deficit hit 35 million, it triggered a state receivership. What ensued was a very public and bitter battle between former political allies that led to a serious unraveling of relationships. Sheila Jordan's refusal to approve the short-term trans-district loan stirred problems with Superintendent Chaconas. Loyalties were divided among the school board members, who were split what steps to take to get out of debt.

For Gary, at some point it made sense to move forward with the loan rather than to take up a fight with the state, which according to the conditions of the loan, meant that then-Superintendent Chaconas needed to resign or else be fired. Whereas Directors Greg Hodge and Dan Siegal, both attorneys, wanted to take on a legal battle with the state, Yee and the others resigned themselves to the fact that the state was going to refuse them a loan unless accepted the terms and conditions. This was quite a difficult decision with external actors, outsiders in a sense, stripping democratic control people invested in Oakland students and schools:

On a personal basis, it was the public humiliation from a board and a governance perspective, the powerlessness. Even though people elected you to make good decisions, your decisions were meaningless. It was kind of a façade. The board and I would meet with Randy Ward once a month but you knew it was just to talk so you really felt like the shift from local governance to state governance was actually happening. And during that time, there was a big flood of charters, about 30 charters or so under state administration. So to feel like you're standing by without being part of the decision-making that could actually do anything. It's really kind of like my dissertation at a different level in that there are institutional forces over which local governance is just probably not powerful enough. That there are other forces in play.

Board members were blindsided by the political dynamics outside of the school board's control by policy actors largely unknown to them. As Yee put it, "It's really a mistake to oversell your own ability to make decisions without the larger geopolitical context."

The state takeover of Oakland Unified, an intergovernmental process, was experienced quite differently among various stakeholders. In an attempt to "take the politics out" of school improvement, politics simply took a different direction. With the influence of an expanding independent audit agency, FCMAT, and its support by various elected officials, a 100-million-dollar loan from the state became inevitable for OUSD. Administrators and other staff worked to keep the district afloat; however, the focus on specific, technical issues were a distraction from more endemic problems. During this time, the influence of outside actors radically redefined power dynamics in the district, shifting the hierarchy of who called the shots. Private sector leaders, philanthropists, state elected officials, mayors, and university researchers grew more influential from the late 1990s, particularly through small schools and charter school reforms. The state takeover was particularly

bitter fight between old and new political alliances that involved the mayor and state officials, and it was something that many board members admitted in retrospect that they were too naive to foresee.

Berkeley

Staying in the Black

The financial troubles began in 2000, when BUSD was assessed a fine of \$1.16 million by the state for not reimbursing teacher development days. To eliminate the financial penalty, BUSD was required by the state in 2002 to work with FCMAT in their evaluation of the district and to create a five-year improvement plan with funds appropriated from the district budget (BUSD, 2003; AB 2859, 2002). In addition to the evaluation, FCMAT was brought in as a fiscal adviser to BUSD by the Alameda County Office of Education, whose office failed to approve the district's 2001 budget. Alameda County superintendent Sheila Jordan told a local newspaper a few years later, "We had given a negative certification to the district and it was well on its way to being taken over by the state" (Bhattacharjee, 2007).

Newly hired BUSD superintendent Michele Lawrence was tasked with fixing the district's major financial hurdles in 2001. FCMAT began its review of Berkeley Unified in 2003 around five designated areas, of which the staff was to devise a recovery plan. Superintendent Lawrence started with budget cuts — and the backlash soon followed. Berkeley parent Santiago Casal was disappointed by the district's first superintendent, who he perceived to not prioritize tackling racial inequities. But leaders in Berkeley had another option that was more politically and economically difficult for those in Oakland: parcel taxes and bonds. District leaders worked with Berkeley parents and community members in response to the crisis by increasing taxes.

In 2004, 72.9% of Berkeley voters approved a "bridge measure" that would increase funding by \$8 million to supplement its dwindling parcel tax, Berkeley Schools Excellence Program (BSEP), which supports small class sizes and music programs (BUSD, 2020). The BUSD website states that the fiscal crisis was due to the fact that the "Dot-com boom went bust," but this measure also took place during FCMAT oversight that required changes in financial management and operations. BSEP was renewed through the Berkeley Public Schools Educational Excellence Act of 2006 (Measure A) with high voter support at 79.7% (Resolution 05-87). In 2011-12, when districts across the country were still grappling with the post-recession cuts, the funding from BSEP generated \$23.9 million in addition to the district's budget (BUSD, 2020). Former Superintendent Bill Huyett (2008-2012) pointed to "Berkeley's support of its schools" as one part, accompanied by public trust in how BSEP is administered now and how it's done.

People will say, "Well, they're just liberal and they just pass taxes," but that's not really true. There's a lot of taxes here that don't get passed. When I was here, they had a swimming pool tax and that didn't get passed by the city. I would say only about half of the initiatives that were put before the voters were ever passed here. It did need a two-thirds vote, so it's quite a high threshold. But I think it's because one, people do value education, and secondly, the school district has a standing committee of people that have worked on this and they go and talk to people about what it's for. It's very clear what it's being used for, and there's acceptance of that, and there's a lot of oversight by the P&O Committee about how the district spends the money.

Homeowners foot the bill, which is made possible by ballooning housing prices only affordable to an increasingly affluent population. Compared to 44% in 2010-11, only 26.7% of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunches (California Department of Education, 2020).

In between the two measures, in January 2005, FCMAT released a six-month progress report on BUSD, the third out of four, that reported that the “fiscal solvency has been restored, formal business processes and procedures and internal controls have been established.” Moreover, once the Alameda County Office of Education’s approved BUSD’s 2004-05 adopted budget, FCMAT has been removed from the fiscal advisory role to the district. The district made improvements in areas like financial management, but Superintendent Lawrence commented that these metrics set up by FCMAT seemed arbitrary:

“Since FCMAT is not evaluating all school districts in the state, there’s not a standard by which we can judge ourselves and take examples,” she said. “If there is a school district that got a perfect 10 in any of the areas, for example, we’d like to go and look at it so we can go and see what they’re doing that we are not. I asked FCMAT, but they told me they haven’t given out any 10s. So in the absence of statewide standards, we can only use the reports as internal documents by which to measure our own progress.” (Berkeley Daily Planet)

Berkeley Unified ultimately staved off an audit by staying in the black, which shielded the community from further surveillance that would have proven even more disruptive for students and families, as the state receivership did in Oakland.

Racial Tensions Amid Budget Cuts

As the BUSD superintendent and her central office staff worked to balance the budget under FCMAT oversight and stave off a state takeover, a different kind of racial surveillance was occurring on the ground. Staff cracked down on “illegal” students enrollment in the district through address verification work. Moreover, many parents and activists felt that the economic downturn gave the district an excuse to not prioritize equity-oriented programming.

Berkeley public schools are academically stronger and more resourced compared to Richmond and Oakland, its neighbors to the north and south, respectively. BUSD allows a limited number of inter-district transfers. With heavy taxes, more overcrowding, and longer waitlists at schools, including Berkeley High’s academies, parents became more territorial about protecting ‘their’ public resources. Emily Nathan saw these dynamics as a White woman working in BUSD central office and whose kids attend Berkeley schools while residing in Oakland:

It's very interesting when that comes up because it's so racialized. Here's an example. I live in Oakland, so my kids are here on a permit. I've had conversations on the yard who I know, I fit right in. They're talking about these kids from Oakland, different kids, how it's taking away the resources from their kids because now that's more kids in the class. Some of those kids have behavior issues or require SPED. So I say to them, "should I not be here then? Because I'm one of those families." "Oh, no, no." I'm like really? I'm here on a permit, are you saying that my kid has less of a right to be here than yours? I have friends who we have really gone toe-to-toe on that and we disagree. We've agreed to disagree. Because my attitude is when a student walks in your door, that's your student. It doesn't matter where they're from. If you're all about kids then great, you've got these kids from Oakland that you get to serve now and your kids get to know them, your kids get to learn how to be in an environment with all different kinds of kids, with all different academic challenges. But because they're from Oakland that means... You know. So it's very racialized.

The district started to crackdown on address verification by showing up at people's homes. While these families do not pay parcel taxes in Berkeley, commuting into Berkeley is a different kind of tax on their kids, which Nathan explained "gets lost" in the conversation:

A lot of the families that come from Oakland or Richmond who lets say have used other people's addresses or are even here on permit, people don't realize how much they're giving up to get their kids here. I know people who are up at five in the morning to get their kids here on time. [...] My kids, it sucks for them to not live near their friends or be able to walk to school. We've given something up so that our kids can have a certain education.

Throughout the 2000s, district leaders were more preoccupied with financial challenges which compromised their commitment equitable education funding and programming. Parent and activist Santiago Casal perceived Michele Lawrence, the central office staff, and school board to be lacking the urgency and commitment to addressing the wide achievement gap:

They would probably say, "Yes, we were addressing the achievement gap." But is it in your soul or isn't it? All the people who are on the board now and the superintendent think they are addressing that issue as well. But to me, it's a matter of 'is this something that you are dedicating yourself with a sense of urgency every day and that you keep the reality in front of you at all times?' Because there's so many distractions [for] people who are in the district or school board. There's so many other things that are going on that you have to address. It's hard to keep this major dimension in your focus, unless it's so rooted in your soul that you are fighting it all the time, maybe even to the detriment of not doing the other things that you are supposed to do. That's a key priority. I think that was not the case, and to me, it's still not case.

He was disappointed by Superintendent Lawrence's inaction, especially coming from a fellow Latino. This is part of a longer legacy of administrations more allied with the "Hills people" than they were with the Black and Brown families in the district. Together with other African American and Latinx parents, they turned their criticism of BUSD leadership's lack of vision into an ambitious equity initiative, the 2020 Vision (see chapters 6 and 7 for more analysis). They began with advocating for a new superintendent "who is open to the community and an attitude of 'we have to work together,' as opposed to someone who is closed to that."

Unlike the "turnaround" rhetoric that dominated the last 20 years of leadership theories of action, serving in central office and on the school board is far from straightforward, technical work. The last 30 years have been marked by political contention between the State of California, Alameda County, the city government, and the district over who controls local public schools. While mayoral and state receiverships are meant, on some level, to "take the politics" out of district reform, schooling is inherently political and democratic impulses will rise to the surface. Before, during, and after receivership, leaders had to respond to the many competing values of not only the constituents, but new fiscal agencies, like FCMAT. These narratives demonstrate that to affect social change for public schools and their communities, leaders need to engage in the governing politics of school reform.

Austerity and Disinvestment: The Growth of Philanthropy

The 2003 state receivership was key in reorganizing district governance by increasing private contracts without the oversight of an elected school board. In the years that followed, from 2003-2009, the state takeover catalyzed the creation of the portfolio district in Oakland. Between the

Oakland-based Rogers Family Foundation and the global reach of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, philanthropy took on a more instrumental role during this time in facilitating the marketization within the district through the use of public-private partnerships (P3s). While state-level policy actors were instrumental in the process, there were many local leaders that played a significant role in facilitating the state receivership, and eventually, creating a coalition to transform the school district. Meanwhile, Berkeley Unified struggled to attract philanthropic support despite media attention on its initiatives (and problems) over the years. Their own public education fund was established to meet the funding gaps caused by Proposition 13, and maintained a supportive role in the district.

Oakland

The Faces and Strings of Oakland Reform

"We'll be observing from a distance, but we won't be running the district in any way, shape or form," Eli Broad told the Oakland Tribune during the state takeover of OUSD (Katz, 2003). This, however, was far from true. Multi-billionaire philanthropist Broad established his own training academy for school administrators in 2002 which would produce leaders with business management skills. Since then, four Broad alumni have led OUSD, three of which were appointed by the state, and notably, all of whom are African American: Randy Ward (2003-06), Kimberly Statham (2006-07), Vincent Matthews (2007-09), and Antwan Wilson (2014-17). The Broad Foundation also generously funded positions in OUSD during the state receivership as well as state politicians' campaigns, such as \$100,000 for Jack O'Connell's successful campaign for California's Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2002. His campaign also received \$250,000 in donations from Reed Hastings, Netflix CEO and venture philanthropist (Ultican, 2019).

Philanthropy has played a key role in Oakland's schools, along with the universities, for at least two decades prior to the state takeover. But with shrinking funds and declining enrollment, leaders of cash-strapped districts found themselves becoming more dependent on money than they had in previous years. These funds came with strings. Through the state takeover, FCMAT, state officials, and a nationwide venture philanthropy network made Oakland schools and students vulnerable for experimentation. Case in point, the Broad Academy has cultivated new leaders from the corporate sector to lead school districts as executives would. In this theory of action, echoing the portfolio and new public management ideals, superintendents should be managers and instructional leadership can be contracted out to consultants (Broad Foundation, 2009; Ultican, 2019). Teaching is almost a detriment, according to Eli Broad:

"The problem that Dennis [Chaconas] and others like him have is they start as teachers, and then 30 years later they become superintendents with no training in finance, labor relations, etc., and they surround themselves with people like them," Broad said. "I think people need the kind of training we give them. There's no other place I know of where they can get it." (Katz, 2003).

This leadership paradigm is a quite different from previous expectations. Dan Siegel, former board member who hired Dennis Chaconas, described his friendship with the ousted superintendent, who was very engaged in the schools around instructional support:

He would call me on the phone, he said, "Dan you want to see some schools?" I said "sure." So he picked me up in front of the administration building and we go visit five or six schools. And so I really got a sense of how it works, or how it should work. And then when

we did our search, we did a national search. We had lots of applicants. We talked to people in Alameda and especially principals who would say, "Dennis, as our superintendent, taught us how to be principals." What is a principal? Head teacher. Not disciplinarian, not fund raiser, not cheerleader, not whatever bureaucrat... Head teacher. And so that's what we wanted. And we hired him in 2000.

However, the "teaching superintendent" identity has been lost under the new public management paradigm, where fiscal vitality is the key challenge under austerity.

When discussing the current state of OUSD finances and portfolio governance, community member Mike Hutchinson pointed to the state takeover in 2003 as "the elephant in the room for all of this because that changed everything." Whatever flawed democracy existed in the district was fundamentally changed. In addition to the school board being stripped of its powers and the firing of "homegrown" appointed leader, board committees were disbanded and community members had to respond to one person: Randy Ward (see Chapter 7 for community mobilization for small schools). Kim Davis, OUSD parent activist, recalled the powerlessness during the takeover:

It felt very much like parents — I mean we just didn't really have any kind of power or say. I think it's maybe as much mental as anything else. The idea that you know there is someone who is not responsive in any kind of democratic way, and so what's the point as a parent to try and impact policy on a district level when I don't have an elected school board member who's advocating for children? So, it definitely felt disempowering, but I still worked at my child's school site and I was supportive of teachers, really not a lot of district-wide things.

And what is most paradoxical, is that the district emerged from the state takeover with even more debt. After six years of state administration and the largest state loan ever made to a California school district, the budget deficit grew from \$37 million to \$89 million (Murphy, 2009). From Kim's perspective:

Again, it's complicated because we do have a long history of not doing things well. That started before we were taken over by the state, and it continued while we were taken over. [...] You would think that if the state was taking over, because we were having financial difficulties that would've actually turned in a different direction. So the state bears, in my opinion, a good portion of responsibility for the mistakes and failures in the systems that we don't have. The things that cause us to have structured budgets that are out of balance. I'm not a financial expert, but I do understand that if you spend more than you earn, eventually that's gonna catch up with you even if you start off with a little cash in the bank. I mean it's not a difficult concept.

The district never truly left state receivership. State receivership can be seen as a continuum of control, where OUSD has had a state trustee the entire time, and the role of County Offices of Education has expanded. In recent years, students and activists have demanded that the state forgive the district's loan. However, according to Director Aimee Eng, there is very little "appetite" in the Legislature for forgiving all outstanding debt by districts across the state (Epstein, 2019). State Assemblyman Bob Bonta instead pointed to AB 1840 as a solution to adopt different kinds of austerity measures that will stabilize the district's finances:

He said 1840 does not require closing schools and selling school property but allows the district to cut central office overspending and sell school property to build affordable housing, a “win-win for everybody.” (Epstein, 2019)

However, it came with what board director Shanthi Gonzales called a charter school “poison pill” that requires the district offer facilities to charter school operators first before selling or leasing public property.

In short, these changes destabilized Oakland Unified rather than provide the support promised by the state. These patterns reveal the complex web of factors that inevitably weighed on Oakland’s capacity to enact more civic-minded reforms. Powerful elites weighed heavily on Oakland leaders’ ability to deepen pre-existing reform efforts. City-level managerial leaders played significant roles in determining the focus of the Oakland school district’s leadership practice. Likewise, state-level policymakers largely circumscribed the extent to which Oakland’s leaders could deepen home-grown, organic reform initiatives. With the education landscape rapidly changing, concerns over resource scarcity among communities of color met political in-fighting among Oakland power players. This created a political and financial crisis wide enough for philanthropists to have full reign to experiment with.

Berkeley

Berkeley Public Schools Fund and BSEP

Former BUSD superintendent Bill Huyett (2008-2012) would tell his colleagues in other parts of the state, “For every dollar you have, I have \$1.50.” The Berkeley Schools Excellence Program (BSEP) is a local tax initiative with tight controls over how the funds may be used, and requires extensive community involvement in planning and overseeing the expenditures through a committee that meets on a monthly basis. But more than parcel taxes, Berkeley turned to fundraising efforts to fill the funding void caused by Proposition 13. Berkeley Public Schools Fund was at the forefront in 1983 as public education foundations popped up across the state in the decades that followed.

Mary Friedman was the volunteer director for many years which her husband, a lawyer, urged her to take part in. A White woman, she moved her kids to Head Royce, a private school in the Oakland Hills, from Malcolm X Elementary in South Berkeley, which she described as a “really bad place for kids” at the time. They eventually enrolled their kids back into Berkeley High School, and brought with them the fundraising strategies they had seen at Head-Royce to support their children’s increasingly disinvested public schools. She explained:

The Berkeley Public Education Foundation¹⁰ was incorporated as a result of the community meeting: “what could we do to show the teachers that in spite of all this terrible stuff that’s going on, we as a community want to show our support?” The original idea was actually to establish — we thought small at the time — sort of a warehouse where we could solicit supplies and get them to teachers.

¹⁰ Original name, later changed the Berkeley Public Schools Fund.

It started with a letter writing campaign to their networks to solicit funds “to put back in the classroom” when Friedman became very involved in a matter of months: “By 1984 it was in our dining room where it lived for the next eight years. So very much a start-up. You know, all volunteer.” The organization grew into a more prominent fixture in the community. She became the volunteer executive director when they couldn’t garner funding from the Ford Foundation to hire an executive director:

The Ford Foundation, at that time, was giving out money to start nonprofit foundations throughout the country to support public schools. They made three visits to Berkeley and then said no. I called them up and they said, “Well, you just don't have the demographics.” And I said, “Why did it take three trips to Berkeley to figure out that we didn't have the demographics you were looking for?” We weren't a big enough city, we didn't have a poor enough population — they knew that. They had three amazing trips to Berkeley to decide they weren't going to fund it. That's my impression.

Friedman’s analysis points to the idea that Berkeley simply was not poor enough to garner funds from the philanthropic and corporate sector. However, there were many times when these partnerships came close to being realized.

Board members, union presidents, and intermediary consultants revealed that Berkeley has not been attractive to funders. Whereas in places like Oakland and San Jose, the higher poverty mixed with entrepreneurial leaders make it more enticing for philanthropists to begin a new project from scratch. Without crisis and instability, Berkeley is not the environment to make their name. As board member Beatriz Leyva-Cutler explained, they are less interested in sustaining good projects:

It's very, very rare that somebody, a funder, will give you money just because you're doing good. They want to see a problem and they want you to fix it. Not having sustained something. We're trying to do a sustainability plan for the district that looks more about environment and food, nutrition, farm to school. How do we do energy efficiency? That's a project that could be funded. How do we as a district and in our community, educate our parents and our students and our teachers, and also incorporate this into environmental literacy for our students? And I think there's funders for that, but it's a long-term project.

Victor Cary, of the National Equity Projects, recalled having to convince his ED at the time, Steve Jubb, about the potential to reform in Berkeley during the small schools movement of the 2000s. And when foundations did approach Berkeley, they were shunned, not just by progressive activists, but even the superintendent herself. Former BFT president Cathy Campbell credits Michele Lawrence for seeing the writing on the wall when Jeff Camp¹¹ approached the district about his philanthropy called Full Circle:

He came to us and wanted to work in Berkeley to achieve something like ProComp [teacher evaluation system]. [...] And he wanted us all to sit and meet. And I'm this new person, I'm kind of reform-oriented. I believe what Randi Weingarten says: “If you're not at the table, you are what is being served.” So get yourself to the table. And I heard the concern and I saw the numbers and we have to respond ...all of us. So I brought him in for some meetings, and [Superintendent] Michelle Lawrence was great. She looked at him at one point and asked, “Mr. Camp, do your kids go to public school?” And he said, “No, they do not.”

¹¹ He has since gone on to work for Parent Revolution.

She said, “Well thank you.” And then she was silent the rest of the meeting. One of the ways to fund the 2020 Vision would have been to really dive in to some of these groups to get some money. Broad would have given us money. Walmart would have given us money. We could have gotten money from the Gates foundation. Because what we wanted to do was sort of what everybody was talking about. But Michelle Lawrence was adamant: “You do not do that. You make yourself beholden.” You lose control and you start things and you get used to them and the money goes away. And she really did not believe it was fundamentally about public education. She felt it was about privatization. Turns out she was right.

Coming from Panoramic City in Southern California, Superintendent Lawrence had already seen the issues with intermediary organizations and charter schools. Campbell reflected on the way, “When I think of Berkeley, I think how did we get buffered? Well, certainly our affluence is the main thing, but I feel like there were these other ‘buffers.’” These ‘buffers’ included leaders with strong values that centered public good over profit.

The belief in public education and skepticism of private oversight runs deep throughout Berkeley. Even the long-time director of Berkeley’s foundation had her doubts about the effects of her fundraising efforts. Friedman admitted, “I’m very mixed about the role of these nonprofit foundations supporting public schools because really it takes a little bit of the edge off for demanding that the state properly fund public schools.” She and the board made a commitment to maintain their focus more driven by the teachers in the classroom, and have since remained largely a grant-making organization on classroom support. This is in part to distance themselves from the “district agenda,” which was quite unpopular around that time, she explained:

Because we started in response to school closure, and there was a lot of anger in the community at the district, we had to make clear from the very beginning that we were not influenced by the district. That we were really being driven by the teachers in the classroom as to how we funded grants. [...] The central administration people don't come to us and ask to fund their pet projects.

The current executive director Erin Rhoades explained they have to remind donors that they cannot put the money where they see fit, as a part of their equity focus. They have worked closer with central office over the years, even becoming the fiscal sponsor of the BUSD middle school music program, volunteer program, and STEM initiatives. They have also been instrumental in community engagement in rebuilding facilities in the late 1990s, the creation of the clinic at Berkeley High, and the Universal 9th grade redesign (Berkeley Public School Fund, 2019). But much of their work supports one-time expenses sought out by teachers, mainly classroom supplies and resources. This is quite different from the Oakland Public Education Fund, which has district positions on their payroll, funds entire departments OUSD, like the Equity Department that houses the African American Male Achievement Program, along with supporting charter schools in Oakland. BUSD board president Beatriz Leyva-Cutler still believed that philanthropy played too small of a role in Berkeley given the affluence of the city. She explained, “I think there's a lot more opportunity out there, we just don't have the bandwidth to go after it. Without corporations like Coca Cola trying to brand us, there should be more philanthropists. There's people here in Berkeley that are very wealthy.”

As former superintendent Michelle Lawrence warned BFT president Cathy Campbell: philanthropic investments have proven to make districts beholden to their funders. Berkeley was spared from an extractive relationship defined by market dependency, while Oakland was not. Still, some of BUSD’s elected officials and education leaders today expressed the need to tap into the

wealth right in their backyards. As new economic challenges destabilize districts across the state and country, even “suburban-urban” districts like Berkeley, diverse and well-funded, will be pressured to develop public-private partnerships under neoliberal hegemony.

Gentrification and the Great Recession

Education and housing are inextricably linked sectors that shape neighborhood demographics and opportunities, both of which have been profoundly impacted by the cuts in federal spending (Sharkey, 2013). Many cities are undergoing a dramatic demographic transformation with gentrification processes that incentivize higher-income workers to move to urban centers as poor and working-class communities of color are pushed out, unable to afford the high rent. In Oakland, state disinvestment in urban education, and urban spaces more generally, has driven OUSD to turn to the booming housing market for revenue as it repays its long-standing debt to the State of California – six million dollars a year until 2026 to pay off the \$100 million loan (Katz, 2012). Consequently, these conditions have constrained democratic participation, leading district actors to act efficiently at the cost of transparency, while community stakeholders organized to inform themselves, educate the public, and create an alternative message to neoliberal education and housing policy. In Berkeley, the economic and demographic shift from the Great Recession and gentrification drastically shaped the school district’s population. Wealthier families, upon hitting financial issues, were returning to public services and the needs of low-income families were being marginalized in the process.

Oakland

Dewey Academy

Illustrating the nexus of district austerity, gentrification, and community organizing for education reform is the case of Dewey Academy High School, a continuation public high school that was faced with the possibility of being moved out of its location southeast of Lake Merritt as negotiated by Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and private housing developers, led by San Francisco-based UrbanCore, Development. The OUSD staff proposed this partnership as an opportunity to use the funding from private developers to finance the construction of a new, higher quality school facility and to remodel the district administrative building. In response, teachers, students, and organizers from the community formed the “Hands Off Dewey” coalition to voice their opposition. Community members coalesced to resist privatization efforts targeting low-income students of color, naming these actions as symptomatic of gentrification processes that displace longtime low-income residents of color. The coalition framed these actions as “displacement” of students from their school, echoing the discourse used by housing activists. When asked who exactly would support leasing Dewey Academy, Sonia Jimenez, a high school student, responded, “People who would want to get OUSD out of debt. Wealthy people who really don’t put themselves in our shoes. [...] Wealthy people that want to have a view of the lake.”

At a local public education event, the community schools manager at Dewey Academy High School described the obstacles her students face, “By the time my students get to Dewey, they’re already the breadwinners of their families. By the time they get to Dewey, they’ve been rejected by other schools.” Dewey is racially diverse, yet almost entirely students of color (41% Black, 41% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 2% White, and 1% Pacific Islander), with the vast majority of students receiving free or reduced lunch (OUSD, 2016). Dewey Continuation started in 1963 as Oakland’s first continuation school, offering students the opportunity to earn credits to graduate. In 2001, the school was moved from the Fruitvale District to its current location and renamed Dewey Academy

during the small schools movement (“About Dewey / Overview,” n.d.). While the District is attempting to rebrand Dewey as a “school of choice with a 21st Century learning facility,” it has taken some time to shake the school vision and public image (“Educational Leadership Center / Transforming Dewey Academy,” n.d.). The community schools manager defended the school, “Dewey is not as bad as people think. There are a lot of positive things happening there,” citing the convenience of a student-based health center on campus.

One highly active community member, known for keeping tabs on the district, discovered the district’s plans to lease Dewey Academy’s facilities and land through a district meeting agenda published online. OUSD proposed this as an opportunity to use the funding from private developers to finance a new, higher quality school building as well as to remodel the district administrative building. The district put forth a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), inviting developers with proposals for the land where Dewey currently is located. The City of Oakland had an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) with UrbanCore, and OUSD had set up a surplus facilities committee to declare the property surplus before it could be sold to private developers in exchange for more funding. District officials later told local news that their plans to relocate Dewey was only temporary while they built a new building alongside the new administrative building (K. Epstein, 2014).

Although this move was allegedly temporary, these agreements triggered a backlash among members of the school community, some of whom joined together to form the “Hands Off Dewey” coalition. Teachers, students, and organizers from the “Hands Off Dewey” coalition viewed this form of privatization targeting low-income students of color as symptomatic of larger gentrification processes that displace longtime working-class residents of color. Moreover, they argue that potentially moving the school to another part of the city could compromise the safety of its students given the fact that Dewey is a continuation high school intentionally placed outside of neighborhood gang territory and accessible by public transit. The campaign frames this move as “displacement” by potential developers like UrbanCore seeking to buy the school property to add to its 24-story condominium project (Mendoza & Finch, 2014). Coalition members saw the RFQ as a “key step in the process of leasing off public land and disrupting Dewey’s public work.”

Located in a diverse neighborhood within walking distance to Chinatown, Lake Merritt, and a BART train stop, students at Dewey Academy have access to opportunities, like community college classes and internships, as well as relative safety navigating a gang neutral area of the city. Its prime position is a double-edged sword, however, as Dewey Academy’s location makes it ripe for market-rate housing development in a gentrifying neighborhood. The centrality of gentrification throughout the Hands Off Dewey campaign is indicative of the link between education policy and city planning, specifically housing developments and schooling facilities. “Specific plans” are plans developed by the city to rezone areas, conduct an environmental impact, and streamline development for a certain section of the city. In December of 2011, the Lake Merritt Specific Plan specifically changed the zoning of the parcel land where Dewey is located from institutional (government) to urban residential, thus allowing buildings of up to 20 stories built onto that land. What had upset organizers most was that a draft proposal of the rezoning plan had been signed off by their board member but was never communicated to the Dewey community (K. Epstein, 2014; Levin, 2014). Jonathan Simmons, a teacher at a nearby OUSD school, viewed the market-rate housing project as “part and parcel” to gentrification of the East Lake neighborhood, and expressed outrage about the role of the district in facilitating the process. “Unless it’s 100% affordable housing, it’s going to gentrify the area,” he argued, “OUSD was going to actively increase the process of gentrification. It’s a horrible thing for a school district to do.”

The stressful conditions produced by broader financial constraints illuminate how these restrictions led to certain decisions and actions on the part of the staff and board members. After

the administration building on Second Avenue next to Dewey was wrecked by water damage in January 2013, the district headquarters temporarily relocated to downtown Oakland, where its monthly rent is covered by insurance (K. Epstein, 2014). In order to earn extra financial support for the district and fund a much-needed new building, the developers presented an immediate source of funding. Then school board President Kakishiba told *The Post News Group* in an interview, “We are looking for how we can leverage some district property so we can pay for a new central administration facility or pay for the ongoing lease for the facility” (K. Epstein, 2014).

Tony Perez, another OUSD educator, admitted that making a profit can seem logical as land values in Oakland surge by 30% in just two years, “It makes sense to try to build some land, put some housing on it, get some high paying renters to come to take up the space. I think that’s the motive on their part: profit generation through private housing.” Simmons linked the immediate issues of why this particular plot of land is “up for grabs” to the larger context of austerity. He pointed out the difficulty in thinking outside the box given the district’s limitations:

These people [on the 7/11 committee] don’t have this awareness of political issues in the district. It can be a pretty hectic place, you know? And all of the students they had people coming and were like, “what’s going on?” So that was to our credit that Dewey put doubt into that place because the district was presenting their side, and you know in the way that bureaucracies do, they kind of demotionalize everything. And just like, “this is the facts,” and the facts were obviously slanted one way with the money. Because if you just look at the money situation, you would be like ‘oh yeah, we do need more money.’ Especially the way the school district frames money, they never look for other sources of money. We’ve always tried to push ‘what about the money from Kaiser, or from cutting consultants?’ All of these other sources of money, which aren’t what the district looks to. And they call this “creative financing,” but creative financing means privatization. There are all of these assumptions laid in there and they were trying to really sneak it through.

Simmons proposed alternatives, such as Kaiser, an integrated managed care consortium, pay or cutting consultants, but he believed the district officials were set on a specific form of “creative financing” that has had negative implications for students.

There are multiple development projects and private-public partnerships simultaneously occurring near the last working-class neighborhoods of color surrounding Lake Merritt. Bordering Chinatown, Dewey’s immediate neighborhood has a significant Asian population. The inter-racial politics of representation were critical to this case; older first-generation Asian community members were brought to City Hall in support of the neighboring UrbanCore development project led by Michael Johnson, a Black man (BondGraham, 2015). Some argued these elderly Asian people were used to show that development could benefit those already living in the neighborhood as a means to justify gentrification. A half-mile away and in square view of Dewey rests the Kaiser Convention Center, an historic public institution that once hosted the Ringling Brothers, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Grateful Dead. The City of Oakland sold the building in 2011 to Orton Development, who has a \$52 million plan to reopen the building into a space with a small auditorium and offices with a brewpub or distillery on the ground floor (Weinberg, 2015). Although developers and elected officials envision this to be a source of job opportunities for Oakland youth, Perez described the rhetoric of austerity as situating any economic venture as an opportunity for marginalized people, while striving to serve a growing elite population of residents.

In Oakland, instead of redistribution of funding under deepening wealth inequality, philanthropists (who have amassed more wealth over recent decades), have taken charge in filling the funding gaps. The process of contracting out services under austerity-induced budget cuts has

led the district to continue to privatize its services. District staff and board members work with private developers to lease increasingly valuable property – school facilities and land – to leverage some capital with the aim of increasing revenue and managing debt. Consequently, these conditions have constrained democratic participation, leading district actors to act efficiently at the cost of transparency, while community stakeholders organized to inform themselves, educate the public, and create an alternative message to neoliberal housing and education policies. The Oakland case illuminates the cracks in hegemonic ideas about the market and fiscal solvency, where the Hands Off Dewey Coalition worked on a counter-hegemonic campaign to redefine the problem and solution of Oakland's financial problems. However, a *cultural political economy* lens illuminates the limits of a four-month grassroots strategy amid the weight of political economic constraints. And thus, in the years that followed, organizers went on to engage more directly with elite decision-making, the *urban regime*, that had a major hand in shaping local governance.

Berkeley

“Keep 9.5 Alive”

Like Oakland, gentrification and the Great Recession have defined Berkeley over the last 15 years. The cost of living has skyrocketed, and the housing market is largely unaffordable people making less than six figures. In a memo to the school board, BUSD Technology Director Jay Nitschke wrote, “The ongoing gentrification of Berkeley has changed the population of Berkeley schools significantly this decade.” The change to cities and schools is inextricably linked.

When Berkeley parent and activist Pablo Paredes was able to get a spot in an affordable housing building in downtown Berkeley, he ran into constant battles over space and belonging in schools and in housing. He explained, “NIMBY is a term I learned here because I didn't even know what the hell that was. They wanted us there for the pamphlets and the handouts and the tokenism, but they were really bothered by our presence there in every other way.” The building was developed by the John Stuart Company in partnership with the David Barrows Center, an ecology center, or as Pablo put it bluntly, “this hub of green shit.” The developers ran into some financial problems, and eventually struck a deal with the city to get the rest of the funding as long as they would offer some amount of affordable housing inside of the building that they co-developed. However, the limited parking plus the lack of grocery stores and affordable amenities made it quite inconvenient for its low-income residents. Pablo explained:

[The developers] used to do tours — I call them safari tours. They would bring all these folks from the David Barrows Center who are super concerned with environmental justice to tour this affordable housing miracle that they created in downtown Berkeley. They would walk around while we're doing laundry and talk about us and our economic reality, and how they just saved us. It was just painful.

Paredes explained, “All of a sudden they started legislating how we could be in the space.” Low-income families could not be in the courtyard because of noise complaints and their parking spots were opened up to students at a cost. And the sustainability-centered restaurant downstairs complained about the apartment residents too close to their entrance, and swiftly the residents lost a convenient way to enter the building. Paredes described the “insane” hypocritical nature of progressivism in Berkeley, “All these same people have the right bumper stickers and all that, ‘but don't mess with me while I'm having my organic salad because I don't wanna hear your Black and Brown ass.’”

Race and class divides were evident in the battle between all-day preschool versus half-day preschool. The 2008 Great Recession brought a lot of Berkeley families back into the public sphere who otherwise would have kept their kids in private preschool. BUSD operates three public preschools. Paredes described his child early experiences at the Franklin preschool as “really, really dope” in that there were mostly children of color, some bilingual instruction, and good teachers. He was enjoying being actively involved in the school until the recession hit and the demographic shift quickly changed the character and resources of the programs. What had previously been all-day, 9am-5pm, educational and recreational programming for mostly working-class families was starting to shift to part-time care over the course of a year and a half. Pablo recalled the experience with frustration:

A lot of privileged, White families were able to jump onto resources that they never needed because they couldn't afford the private ones, while pushing black and brown poor families out of those same positions. It was really technical and sophisticated the way they did it, right? You can't say, “you get out, put me in.” [...] Suddenly a lot of very privileged, very White parents were dropping their kids off for a little while during the day and this was their alternative to the kind of childcare they had before and it was free. Now they were on the school governance council and they were changing everything about how it worked. There's no more Spanish in class. Just all kinds of crazy things. I just watched it completely transform and completely push one group out, another group in, and become accommodating to that group. It was just mind-boggling.

The power dynamics had also changed the culture of community amongst parents, new parent leaders were in control of communication and even resurrected a long-defunct school governance board for the preschool parents. And there were small and big ways that these forms of parent empowerment came at the expense of working-class families:

For example, nothing happened in Spanish and everything happened over email. Most of the migrant families and the Black working families weren't in those networks. When they wanted to organize something that they needed parent turnout for, oh, then they learned how to make phone calls and texts, and send it home with the kids. But when they wanted to organize something that clearly they didn't want Black and Brown parents to show up, they'd say, “it was in our GroupMe.” So you started to see that there was two strategies of how they communicated. I knew what they were doing, and I could intervene and interrupt a lot. They would never publicly say, “We're trying to take over and push you guys out.” But it changed the tone locally.

Paredes explained how the dramatic transformation whittled down from 16 all-day preschool classrooms to just half, then down to four, until there was only one. He fought “tooth and nail” to keep the one all-day classroom running by organizing parents informally at each other house, usually over tacos. Over 100 parents showed up to board meetings toting t-shirts that read “Keep the 9.5 alive” — the nine and half hours in the all-day program. He laughed as he described one positive moment during that challenging time:

My daughter, her first activist moment was there. She was in one of these [preschool] classrooms and in the middle of the board meeting she just rushed out into the middle of the floor and screamed out her chant. It was the cutest thing in the world.

The working-class parents of color found more allies in city council members than the school board, who were concerned about state budget cuts during the recession. With the help of two council members, he was appointed to an early education commission with the City of Berkeley — “infiltrating” in his words — where he made recommendations to the city council to throw their support behind the 9.5 classrooms. The City put down \$50,000 toward the deficit and the District matched it, ultimately keeping one classroom open. “If they get the last one, this thing will never grow back. But if we can just fight at least one, then we have a place to grow back from,” he said of the small, but significant win, “But you see the shit that you gotta do to survive?”

Control of money has given a new set of elite actors unprecedented power and access to designing the education landscape with districts as sites of experimentation, in the education and housing sector. These findings demonstrate that each district’s decisions and process to leverage their capital – school facilities and land – through the booming housing market was connected to pressures to increase revenue and manage debt. In each city, community members and students of color have contested these decisions, which they see as a form of “displacement” akin to gentrification.

Discussion

In this chapter, I analyzed the converging political economic factors that define the parameters of “local control” with qualitative evidence that reflects how participants’ perceive, experience, and shape these political economic conditions. Local stakeholders are dealing with the repercussions from state laws and policies, which facilitated disinvestment and audit surveillance in California districts that encouraged private contracting through tax reforms, flexible charter school laws, a state takeover bill, and the creation of an independent fiscal agency, the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). And yet, rather than remedy structural inequities, the current politics of educational policy and reform focus on restructuring central office and finding other ways to be more efficient with the money that already exists. In lieu of garnering political will to implement redistributive policies, political elites from larger hegemonic bloc down to the local urban regime garner consent for “restructuring” financial systems and other forms of organizational redesign to distract from more significant shifts in power. This study builds on the literature on intergovernmental relations (IGR) and state takeover, indicating that county and state offices are not held to the same accountability standards as local actors.

Budget cuts to public schools, a prime example of austerity, are a coercive act in the Gramscian sense of serving as a disciplinary mechanism to maintain control of schools and society (Davies, 2011). FCMAT is a parastatal organization that propagates racial surveillance through the use of state receivership and other governing tools. Crisis provokes the fear and confusion that allows for suspending democratic rights, as seen in the state takeover of Oakland in 2003, and to a lesser extent, in Berkeley around the same time. In tracing the intergovernmental politics that led to state audits and takeovers, we see a deeper problem than “fiscal vitality” or “financial mismanagement.” Instead, poor urban districts are deemed incompetent because the people there are perceived by elites as incapable of running their cities and schools. Here, democratic representation, when enacted by working class cities with Black leaders, was considered an obstacle by state officials. Blame is placed on local officials who had no control over the political economic landscape they were forced to navigate: state tax reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, the federal austerity measures that bled urban districts along with other municipal services, and the 2008 Great Recession, which was a blow to California districts, with an even stronger, compounding effect on urban schools. Ultimately, few actors have to take the blame of a complex issue, and the system continues until there is another shock in the form of “crisis.”

By comparing Berkeley and Oakland, we see how FCMAT, along with state and county officials, had a different relationship with each district, which would have long-lasting effects on their educational priorities over the next two decades. The civic capacity in each city indicates that economic conditions are a key piece, but not the sole determining factor in mobilizing support for an education agenda (Shipps, 2003). Oakland has been in perpetual “crisis,” perceived as the site of problems in need of fixing by external actors via decades of “reform.” By flying under the radar, Berkeley can focus on some measured approaches rather than philanthropic experiments, meaning equity gaps. As the interview data highlight, district leaders need to appear competent as a form of political posturing, and more importantly, comply with state officials’ demands, as BUSD’s Michele Lawrence did. The resistance from local stakeholders and leaders like Greg Hodge in 1988 saved them at the time, the pushback in the early 2000s led to harsher punishment for Oakland Unified. As Kitty Kelly Epstein and other participants pointed out, districts like Oakland do not really leave takeover — they have a trustee and continued to face scrutinization and surveillance. Meanwhile, Berkeley rode the wave and the cuts were still incredibly painful for its students, families, and staff; however, it was not nearly as damaging as it was in Oakland. BUSD administrators, staff, and families were not completely sheltered from the effects of economic crisis, but it did not destabilize the community’s trust in the district. Without a crisis in local democracy, BUSD administrators continued to justify further disenfranchisement of its communities of color.

Cultural political economy helps to explain how the economization of schooling permeates ways of knowing and interpretations of policy dilemmas by unpacking market orthodoxies that are “deeply saturating the consciousness of a society” (Williams, 1976, p. xx). Neoliberalism, like any hegemonic ideologies, are not a unified and finished project, but rather continuously contested as seen in the community resistance to district marketization in the Hands Off Dewey campaign in Oakland and Keep 9-to-5 Alive in Berkeley. Common sense attitudes towards privatization indicate a shift; however, market-oriented policies and practices continue to be rolled out. The tension between the growing frustration with market-oriented reforms and continued influence of venture philanthropists on the direction of public education is explored in the next chapters.

Chapter 6: Governance as Ideology & Negotiation

The school district central office has become the locus of change for philanthropists and policy entrepreneurs because it has traditionally been the hub of bureaucratic matters: financial decisions, community engagement, allocation of select resources and programming between and across schools, unionized employment for residents, curriculum and instruction, operating the multitude of services (e.g., instructional, school lunches), coordination of certain equity initiatives and the non-profits that manage them (desegregation, restorative justice, targeted programs like the African American male initiatives), and setting the tone for the district's vision. School districts sit in-between state and federal mandates and community demands, and consequently, the site of philanthropic experimentation in urban schools serving poor, communities of color. More than

This chapter on governance ideologies and practices/technologies answers my second research question and subquestions, which ask: *What are the characteristics of each district's governance model, and how are their differences and similarities related to place-based conceptions of power and democracy? What are each district's priorities, staff roles, decision making processes, funding sources, and community engagement strategies? What does governance restructuring, or lack thereof, reveal about community members' beliefs about the purpose of public education and ideologies of the state?* In illustrating the changes and stasis in each district's central office, this chapter builds a comprehensive conceptualization of urban governance as ideology and negotiation through diverse perspectives beyond central office drawing on interviews, participant observations, and district policy documents. Building on the previous finding, political crisis constrains what policy options are put forth as the solutions to problems of scarcity, and the racial politics of coalition-building are further explored in the next chapter. In this chapter, I examine how crisis narratives shape the evolution of district structure, where democratic engagement has served as a vehicle to foster or challenge marketization, and why alternatives are obscured in the process. Gramsci's analysis of *hegemony* (1971) is continued in this chapter to trace the move from *coercive* practices analyzed in the previous chapter to building *consent* through each district's community engagement practices. I also link *network governance* theories and critiques (Davies, 2011) onto the portfolio strategy and assess the new *modalities* of district redesign (Anderson & Donchik, 2016). This chapter finds that crisis management is maintained and contested through local governance restructuring, where private contracting and non-profit management are increasingly justified through community engagement mechanisms. While these policies aim to be technocratic, they carry implicit ideas of who governs versus who is governed, and how that process is best carried out. Democratic engagement through formal district committees can be tools to manage public dissent in an attempt to generate consent for divisive decisions.

In Oakland, once district and school board leaders re-gained (most) decision-making authority from the state receivership, they continued to develop portfolio initiatives like school closures, budget cuts, and common enrollment to keep the district "financially solvent." The limited community *engagement* practices in OUSD were replaced with what I identify as community *informing* sessions that felt symbolic to many participants. In contrast to other scholars who have interpreted the portfolio strategy as a type of compromise that blends market strategies with public oversight under new city leadership, I find that this form of governance redesign is an extension of previous market-based school reform efforts where many of the same community stakeholders of color continue be excluded from decisions around school closures. In Berkeley, where there are no education reform advocacy organizations and little interest from major philanthropies, community and labor leaders sought change within the government sector. Most notably was the 2020 Vision, a decade-long "collective action" strategy that brings together civic partners from public institutions to close their persistent achievement gap, which did not live up to ambitious equity goals. BUSD's central office has remained largely the same in the process, with the exception of a family

engagement office aimed towards supporting families of color. With few remaining non-profit advocacy organizations, families are engaged more directly with the district, which some stakeholders see as challenging at times. The evidence from the Berkeley and Oakland cases chips away at technocratic approaches to school improvement or district effectiveness to reveal the power shifts, often imbalances, that occur in the name of efficiency.

First, I outline a typology that considers how the political economic conditions of the district alongside stakeholders' understandings around the purpose of schooling – and by extension the role of districts – shape divergent strategies for improving educational equity, achievement, and funding in distinct local political contexts. Second, I briefly examine the small schools movement, a reform strategy that took place in both districts in the early 2000s, and how place shaped distinct the implementation and outcomes. Third, I examine the central office reorganization where distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district's governance structure. Fourth, I consider the connection between philanthropic and private sector influence on democratic engagement, where both districts saw a restructuring of their respective community engagement offices. Fifth, I discuss the role of city government dynamics as well the influence of gentrification on local education initiatives geared towards the increasingly displaced working-class communities of color. I conclude with a discussion of the continuum of public-private partnerships in each district along with the nuances of studying portfolio and other forms of marketization when examined through alternative governance.

Comparison Chart

This chart compares the following areas of governance: school choice (“controlled” vs. “market-based”), school closures, the role of partnerships and privatization of district services, city-district collaboration, community engagement, race and class demographics, and district leaders’ aims.

TABLE 3: Comparison of Governance Areas in OUSD and BUSD

<i>District Governance Area</i>	Oakland Unified	Berkeley Unified
<i>Governance Model</i>	“Community of Schools” Portfolio District	Public Model (Traditional district-operated curricular and programmatic services)
<i>Superintendent Strategic Plan</i>	Blueprint for Quality Schools	No official strategic plan; 2020 Vision was their most cohesive collective action approach between city, university, community college, and district partners
<i>School Choice Model</i>	Charter schools, small schools, alternative schools, neighborhood schools,	Desegregation, Berkeley High academies, alternative high school, no neighborhood schools
<i>Informal School Choice</i>	Inter-district transfer (leaving OUSD), private school options	Inter-district transfer (entering BUSD), strong private school ecology
<i>Community Engagement</i>	Blueprint for Quality Schools Advisory Committee	Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) Committee
<i>Student Enrollment</i>	Common Enrollment, District-Charter Compact	Student Assignment Plan (student assigned to schools based on a composite of attributed diversity & neighborhood characteristics)

<i>Facilities</i>	Under-enrollment (school consolidations, mergers, & closures)	Over-enrollment (address verification policies enforced)
<i>Land & Facilities</i>	Leasing district property to the City (for housing development) or charter management organizations, facilities bonds	Facilities bonds
<i>Alternative Funding & Resources</i>	Heavy/substantive philanthropic support, integration of intermediary organizations, consultants	Targeted philanthropic and local business support, parcel tax measures (BSEP), university...
<i>Financial Transparency & Communication</i>	Fiscal Vitality Campaign	Budget Advisory Committee
<i>Ideologies of the State</i>	Decentralization	Centralization
<i>Racial Equity Programs</i>	Equity Office for targeted programming (African American Male Achievement, etc.), Restorative Justice	Desegregation, 2020 Vision, developing targeted programs for African American students, free breakfast for all to reduce stigma; universal ninth grade
<i>District Improvement Vision</i>	“Reform”	“Equity Gaps”

Lineages of School Experimentation: Divergent Visions of Small Schools

Despite their distinct approaches to governance, there is one reform initiative that both districts shared: small schools. A concept grounded in the work of Deborah Meier and other progressive educators in New York City, the small autonomous schools, as they were originally called, picked up steam in places like Oakland and San Francisco, and eventually Berkeley. The small schools movement defined the early 2000s equity strategy in both districts thanks to groups of enthusiastic educators, which in Oakland was led by immigrant Latinx parents, that eventually were funded by the Gates Foundation (see Chapter 7 for in-depth coalitional politics). Under state-appointed administrator Randy Ward, comprehensive high schools in Oakland were divided into separate schools, each with their own principal, staff, vision, and curriculum. Meanwhile, administrators and teachers in Berkeley had an academies model where staff and leadership were shared within the high schools. In both cases, the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools (now called the National Equity Project), was the intermediary that served to consult on the project, from equity-oriented engagement to organizational restructuring.

Oakland

Addressing Decades of Market Reforms Through the Portfolio Strategy

Oakland represents a critical case of the enduring tensions between civic-oriented versus market-oriented and centralized versus decentralized models of public education for urban schools and communities. Beginning in the 1980s, political demands for democracy, equity, and justice met policy debates about the most effective approach to improving Oakland’s public schools. Coupled with disinvestment in education funding described in Chapter 6, district leaders and partner organizations carried out a series of reforms aimed at central office that vacillated between district versus school site decision making power as well as public funding (via state and local property taxes) versus contracting out services to private sector. Policy debates between researchers and practitioners around “centralization versus decentralization” as a means for school improvement are

inextricably linked with market-based strategies and questions of whether more or less government control opens the door for private sector funding and influence. Its leaders have played a key role in mediating the difficult task of advancing educational change amid competing values among local and external actors. Most of the pressure, as former board president David Kakishiba [2002-2014] explained, came from disparate voices coalescing around “this concept of rejecting command and control” from “downtown” decisionmakers.

How did OUSD arrive to the portfolio model as the solution to community frustration and market ideas? The education reforms in Oakland illuminate the two decades of attempts to shift power through governance, including teacher empowerment, site-based management, school-based budgeting, results-based budgeting, and eventually small schools and charter schools. These initiatives occurred alongside various iterations and interpretations of *community schools* sprinkled in throughout the years.

Community schools expanded and redefined the purpose of schooling through more community-oriented visions. For Oakland, in the late 1960s, the Black Panthers vision of community schools were completely independent from the district, that is, private, as a form of community autonomy funded by grants and private donations (Rosenblum, 2016). Their Free for Children Breakfast Program, started in 1969, laid the groundwork for the expansion of the federal free breakfast program six year later (Gebreyesus, 2019). Within the district, Superintendent Marcus Foster, a highly regarded leader brought in from Philadelphia who was tragically assassinated after a school board meeting, is considered by many to be the champion of an early version of community schools during his tenure from 1970 to 1973 (Spencer, 2012). Community schools reemerged in the 1990s with coordination between national foundations and local governments around place-based community change pilot programs (Jacobson, 2016), which Kakishiba, a non-profit director himself, saw as essentially bringing in non-profits into the public school system. In 2011, under Tony Smith, Oakland Unified became the full-service community school district following a national wave sparked by the Harlem Children’s Zone work that was highlighted in 2010’s *Waiting for “Superman.”* Tensions between internal and external forms of power surfaced repeatedly, and the inertia of external elites eventually shaped leaders’ attention and resources more than internal, community-driven forces. Decades of experimentation with their public schools from “outsiders” disillusioned many Oaklanders, thus creating political momentum for local strategies, like community schools, that take a holistic approach to education and building just, democratic societies. However, the purpose of community schools has narrowed overtime in Oakland to essentially renaming neighborhood schools, its concrete changes include creating health centers in some of the high schools. What these different strategies share, besides their name, is an attention to the factors that shape outside control, and that the traditional functions of schooling will not meet these needs without concerted efforts from across sectors.

Oakland was the site of many national trends aimed at reforming school districts (Smith & O’Day, 1990), following budget cuts from the 1978 Prop 13 property tax reform. By the mid-1980s, *teacher empowerment* and *site-based decision making* were popular ideas taken up by Oakland teachers. These strategies called for more authority for decision making to reside with teachers as opposed to principals and other school site administrators. *Site-based management*, was implemented in OUSD in the late 1990s with a similar aim of sharing decision-making authority at the school level (Chambers et al., 2008). The Coalition of Essential Schools grew prominent in shaping school reform ideas for schools during this time, pushing for efforts that would bring together teachers to make informed decisions on behalf of their school. The concrete changes in school improvement, or empowerment for that matter, was debatable among practitioners. Some participants criticized the mundane tasks that sucked the limited time of educators. In conjunction with SBM, *school-based budgeting* was a policy that deepened decision making power at the school sites that gave principals more flexibility on how

to use resources based on student and school need. While on the Oakland school board, Kakishiba was a proponent of giving principals “budget authority”:

Well, so myself and Dan Siegel wanted to do what was called at that time ‘school-based budgeting.’ You give money to the schools, and you have them figure it out. That was a complement to site-based management. [...] What are you managing if you can't manage the budget?

Site-based budgeting was in theory supposed to give more power to the people, Kakishiba argued, than the neoliberal results-based budgeting that preceded it. His voiced revealed some resentment that decentralized power inferred marketization.

The education reform movements of the 1990s marked a renewed view of schools as part of systems, where researchers and policy leaders reframed educational change and school improvement as part and parcel with holding other institutions accountable. From Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative with the mayor's office (1996-2004) to Superintendent Pete Mesa's plan (1991-1995) to address “life circumstances” that affect student learning, the 1990s were defined by multilayered educational investment. OUSD board director Kakishiba's recalled the impetus for district reform during this time as squarely a deep mistrust of central office:

I think that the people that are pushing more for site-based management in the mid- to late-nineties were basically saying, ‘Downtown, you're stupid. You don't know what you're doing. So just shut up and get out of the way.’ I think cutting through all the crap, that's basically it. I don't think anybody thought through what might be unintended consequences.

Kakishiba's remarks represent a different stance on decentralization, one more commonly expressed in the 1990s before the charter and market-based network reframed the debate. In this, he saw the potential for grounded decision-making power without increased privatization through a “dialectical,” decentralized relationship:

To me it has always been about each school is a separate organizational unit. You have to rely on indigenous leaders up there, but central has a role to play in that. There's a dialectic interdependent relationship between the two. It's not [that] you just let them go and do whatever. And so I have always said that the biggest problem in the school district is management. We don't have people who really know how to manage schools in that kind of a way, and so that's what I've always been saying. I can't really get a whole lot of traction.

He expressed frustration with how Oakland's schools have been managed, but was quick to push back on the idea that decentralization is synonymous with portfolio and other private contracting simply because it aims to give more power to school sites. There are different goals for decentralization, he explained, “The charter ecosystem is definitely pushing [decentralization] as part of a larger portfolio manner. I've gotten into debates with people who say that I'm going down that road because the way district people look at it, it's either-or: it's all autonomy or it's all central management.” Drawing on his non-profit experience leading an Asian youth organization, Kakishiba felt that that site-based decision-making still meant that leadership would step in to support. Instead, what he saw in practice was a shifting of blame from district leaders to school leaders:

What happens in the district is that, “Oh we're site-based management so we can't tell schools what to do.” I said, “That's bullshit because you tell schools what to do all the time

and you're not listening to them, and then you don't take responsibility for when schools are getting poor results. You blame it on the school. But what have you done? What's your paper trail? What have you done to support the leadership of that school?" Inevitably, nobody has one.

Ultimately, the lessons of similar governance reforms have still lacked from not having the resources and support to carry out ambitious changes in the funding and provision of school services.

Throughout the years, administrators and board members have altered the face and structure of OUSD as much as they could within their locus of control, thanks largely to the influence of parents, teachers, philanthropists, university researchers, and state officials. Calls for community control, teacher empowerment, racial justice, and economic and political redistribution were increasingly influenced by market actors and ideas, building the base for the district marketization that exists in 2020. The engrained nature of market-based practices is simultaneously taken for granted by some as well as acknowledged to be a source of problems that need to be reined in, even by charter advocates (see Chapter 7). Evidence points to earlier opportunities for decentralization and more participatory forms of decision making that did not inevitably lead to philanthropic dependency and business influence. Portfolio governance throughout the 2010s demonstrates that neoliberal ideology became less debatable as it grew to become today's common-sense solution to the perceived crisis.

Small Schools in Oakland

In the early 2000s, the small schools concept in Oakland was intimately tied to an emerging network just as a fiscal crisis was brewing and tensions were building between state, district, and municipal actors. In stark contrast to the 2010s, from 1990 until the early 2000s, OUSD had overcrowded schools teeming with students physically unable to fit into their facilities and had to work in portables (May, 2000). Mike Hutchinson, public education advocate and school board candidate, recalled, "What we had in Oakland before the small schools movement by the mid to late '90s is we had a couple of extremely huge schools. So, we had Elmhurst, which was bursting at the seams, and at that point they had at least twelve, thirteen hundred students, I'm not even sure how many they had at most." The district created year-round schedule for some schools in the early 1990s to ease the burden on capacity. But many working-class parents, mostly Latinx immigrants, were unhappy with their child's schooling experiences and unequal Academic Performance Index (API)¹² test scores across schools. Hutchinson explained,

In my opinion, there were a lot of people who were talking about, "it's too big, it's too big." And even back then it was "our class sizes are too big." I think people intentionally corrupted the idea of small class sizes or even a school model and they pushed this small school model. If we would have gone to an academy system or a school within a school system, or figured out a way to reduce class sizes, it would have been great.

From Hutchinson's perspective, the other strategies of providing students with more quality attention and different kinds of pedagogy and mission, like funding smaller class sizes or academies, were pushed to the side for the small schools idea which opened the door for more philanthropic funding. He pointed to an alternative model of a school within a school, similar to Berkeley's academy system:

¹² API was the statewide accountability system from 1999-2013.

There was a difference between a school within a school and a “small school.” And really, it's a wonky issue, and most people — most parents and even most educators — don't really get the distinction. If we would have had kept the schools together, still one principal and one administration, but you have a lead teacher for each school within a school. A lot like the academy systems, or academies within a school. That is very different than breaking off a distinct school.

Hutchinson posited that the push for more funding and resources was obscured by policy leaders in the process, “But that's not what they did. And there was a political aspect to it, the small school movement.”

Yet advocates were quick to point out that this idea was “organic” to Oakland, which BAYCES and later the Gates Foundation worked to cultivate through the district. As detailed in the next chapter, parents and organizers with the Oakland Community Organizations, OCO, along with a group of teachers faced the challenge of a moving target following the state receivership. They had first targeted specific school board members, then moved to the state-imposed superintendent Randy Ward, who was convinced enough to go full speed ahead in doubling the number of small schools across Oakland.

Mirella Rangel, community engagement director with GO Public Schools, wore many hats as a teacher at one of the first charter schools in Oakland and board director at BAYCES whose husband was also on the design team for Encompass Academy, a small school. Aware of the millions of dollars BAYCES had secured from foundations, she attended their workshops with small school leaders to network and share ideas around practices:

I had gone to these retreats as a charter school leader. And a bunch of the people were working in OUSD then and were principals who are starting small schools. While we weren't a small school, we were kind of in community with those folks. [...] It wasn't like you're the district people, we're the charter people. At that point it was like, what's essential to a good school is having a strong leader with a strong team, and BAYCES [believed] ‘regardless of whether you're district or charter, we're going to help make that happen.’ So we would cross-pollinate ideas.

The strong relationship between charter and small school leaders was held together by BAYCES to foster “autonomous visions” that financial support and political momentum from major foundations. This made it easier to jump ship into the charter camp, in a sense, when the foundations pulled their funding. Or as professor, former TFA teacher, and charter school founder Jeff Duncan-Andrade put it, “they gave us enough money to hang ourselves with.” Hutchinson echoed that the allocation of school resources was unsustainable, “Gates gave one-time money to make all these systemic changes. And if you go from one school with one principal to three schools with three principals, three custodians, you lose all the economies scale.” He pointed to the limits to small school funding as the impetus for some teachers and principals to convert their small schools into charter schools.

[How] the charters came into it, though, is that at a certain point when some communities saw, “Oh look, they're getting their own small school there, they're getting that.” The district kind of balked at a certain point because it's like we couldn't do that in every place. And so, some of those small schools said, “Well, we'll just go form a charter school there.” And that was really when Education For Change, EFC [charter management organization], kind of started at that point. So the small schools movement kind of birthed our modern charter

school movement in Oakland. And it was kind of born out of the idea of, "well, look, you're letting them do it, but you won't let us, so we're going to just do it on our own." [L]ike the genie had been out the bottle of letting people do their own thing kind of separately on the side.

Hutchinson identified something that was not often considered in the competitive marketplace paradigm: how can every student and school benefit from this project? Given that the Gates Foundation and other venture philanthropists expected immediate returns on their investment, small schools and the ideas “incubated” from these experimental ideas could not have reached the entire district.

Still, the change in governance and funding brought by small schools did have a ripple effect on other public schools, as seen in the resegregation of Black and Latinx communities in East Oakland. Manzanita SEED is a small school with a Spanish immersion program while Manzanita Community still runs a traditional program through OUSD:

[T]here's also a racial component there. The community is mainly African-American students, and SEED has been mainly Latino students or some white progressive students thrown in. And to have that on the same campus in a neighborhood where a lot of us worked for decades to try to bring black and brown together, it's ripped open a lot of these wounds. And it is literally separated and unequal, and there's no way to get around that. And it didn't have to be that way.

Nidya Baez, former student, teacher, and now assistant principal at Fremont High school, recalled the divisions between fellow small school educators who went on to create charter schools as others decided to stay within the public school district. It was a time of much confusion and upset when small schools were being closed.

Berkeley

Berkeley Experimental Schools Program

Following the desegregation of the Berkeley Public Schools in 1968, the first urban district to voluntarily integrate (detailed further in the chapter), the Berkeley's Experimental Schools Program (BESP)¹³ started the following year. A concept started by progressive students, parents, and teachers, the initiative was institutionalized through BESP after BUSD won a five-year six-million-dollar grant (Kirk, 1982). This spurred the creation of 23 alternative schools and programs throughout the 1970s, in the midst of desegregation mandates. While most of these alternative schools emerging from radical politics of the era (with a few exceptions¹⁴), there were differences in pedagogy, structure, and demographics as shaped by the Free Speech, Black Power, and free schools movements. Community High focused on building a multiracial democratic school and curriculum from the interests of students and teachers, while Other Ways, Black House, and Casa de la Raza were in the tradition of ethnic-centered schools (Tien, 2019).

Fifty years later, a panel of educators involved in the Berkeley experimental schools gathered at the Berkeley Historical Society in June 2019 to share their insights on the exciting, but difficult

¹³ Not to be confused with BSEP, the Berkeley School Excellence Program.

¹⁴ There were some schools served as a “counterweight” to the free schools movement, like “Model School A” which provided a structured classroom environment targeted for highly disciplined learners (The Berkeley Revolution, 2020, para 3).

task of running a school with competing goals and demands. The panelists, as well as much of the audience, were now elders who reflected on the radical roots of their projects, occasionally interrupting to proudly point out their former students in the audience. Carl Brush, one of the educators from Community High, described the influence of the surrounding social movements on their teaching, “The Free Speech Movement started in 1964, and demonstrations would continue for quite a while. They would often start in Sproul Plaza and their target was to come to City Hall, and of course, guess who was right in the way?” Berkeley High School was right in the center of the commotion between campus and downtown, which excited the politically-motivated students as much as those skipping class at “Provo Park”¹⁵. The inception of Community High in response to Berkeley High faculty compelled to connect school issues to the political moment: “Our idea was not so much to be a peripatetic community-wide structure, but to work within what was already there and see if we could transform it.”

Other speakers more forthright about their resistance to governmental oversight. As Herb Kohl, progressive educator and activist, put it, his social justice-oriented was “rudely interrupted by the federal government’s experimental schools program.” With support from the Carnegie Foundation and the BUSD Superintendent Neil Sullivan, who did not ask many questions to Herb’s delight, the teacher and students “declared” themselves a school:

We came up with the name “Other Ways” - plural. The idea is that there is nothing wrong with us wanting to create a school in parallel with whatever currently exists. Berkeley High at that time was having considerable problems with race and some of the quality of what was going on there and with the frustrations of some of the most creative teachers there, who themselves were trapped into a system that they did not create.

These critical pedagogues aimed to “cover what [the district] claims to cover, but do it in your own way. I covered literature by bringing in all kinds of things that may not have been in the curriculum but spoke to the hearts and souls and ambitions of the schools.” With Herb’s connections at the Lawrence National Laboratory at UC Berkeley, students at his school “were allowed computer time while people in the schools were fighting over computer-based education was good or not.”

For Clementina Duron was fresh off fighting for Ethnic Studies as a student at UC Berkeley when she heard about the Chicano-centered school opening up at BUSD. She had not even finished her teaching credential program when she sought a job as an elementary school teacher at Casa de la Raza. Clementina recalled:

The vision of the school and the reality ended up clashing somewhat... like a lot. It was seen as alternative education. The focus was bilingual and culturally-based, and definitely family-oriented. It wasn’t until I saw the yearbook that I realized that we had a pre-K through 12th grade school. ...some of our assistants had their babies in hand, so why not? We’re family. We had a school that the district probably didn’t know about [laughter]. The kids remember that it was very political. We would take kids on field trips that would never be allowed today, be it everywhere from the farmworkers to other kinds of political events.

Even their school yearbook was dedicated to “the spirit of raza” with Mexican Revolutionary figure Emiliano Zapata, on the cover with his quote: “I would rather die on my feet than continue living a life on my knees.” Casa de la Raza, along with Black House and other ethnocentric schools, were a

¹⁵ Originally named Constitution Park and renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Civic Center Park in 1983. It was called “Provo Park” during the Vietnam War.

response to not only discrimination within Berkeley Unified but in the other schools in BESP as well. Upon reflection on Other Ways, Herb shared that “All the problems that existed at Berkeley were at the school.” Despite race, class, and gender inequalities, the difference was that “we were committed to be explicit about the problems, engage the kids in the solution of the problems, and actually teach to it and use rich curriculum around which we could build a convivial school setting.”

This proved to be an ambitious and trying task, and the educators at the alternative schools faced many challenges. Despite a few allies in leadership positions in BUSD, the panelists expressed constraints from other parts of central office. While activists in Oakland and other cities created autonomous schools with a liberatory vision which were often privately-run, BESP ran within Berkeley Unified with funding from the federal Experimental Schools Program (ESP) (NIE, 1976). The tension between autonomy and government regulation was expected. Teachers had hoped for autonomy against the “rigidized, unresponsive school system,” as Carl put it, while the federal aim of the program was to effect “comprehensive change” within local school districts. The district had committed to desegregation, and there was pushback from those advocates about the resegregation of school focused exclusively on Black and Latino youth. One article from that era evaluating the program’s impact discussed the pushback it received:

Berkeley's Experimental Schools Program encompasses twenty-three alternative schools, each of which theoretically affords students a different approach to learning than that available elsewhere. Two of these alternatives, Black House and Casa de la Raza, are designed to offer to their respective black and Chicano students educational programs that are free from the white, middle class biases and pressures allegedly characteristic of an ordinary public school environment. While the notion of educational choice is one of the underlying themes of the Berkeley program, some consider Black House and Casa de la Raza to be constitutionally impermissible approaches to public schooling. The apparent racial exclusivity of student and staff selection policies as well as the ethnic orientation of the curricula at these schools are the sources of such criticism. (Appleton, 1973, pp. 858-859)

Themes around choice versus universal programs are echoed in the reform movements that followed. Furthermore, providing quality academic services proved to be difficult with few certified teachers and limited resources. Clementina admitted that Casa de la Raza struggled with this area:

I have to be honest to say that, pedagogically, we were not prepared. We did not have materials, books. Half the staff were not teachers. Many of us worked full-time for half pay. A major problem at the school is that we were not academically prepared for our students. In the beginning, we were trying to be experimental — open classroom, that kind of thing. But in the end, I realized when one of the kids climbed out the window when I was trying to teach that something was wrong here. This is not education.

There was disagreement among teachers and with parents about what “experimental” really entailed. Educators found that the influx of federal money led to more tensions in their schools due to increased regulation:

We wanted to work essentially within the same financing that everybody else got so that we wouldn't be open to the charge that, 'hey, everybody can do that if they had that much money.' So we tried to stick close to that. We didn't get a lot of outside money. Once the

federal money came in, suddenly it became a whole different ball game. I hate to say that money is a big problem because lack of money is usually the big problem that we're always talking about. But to my way of thinking, that sudden infusion of money into the district and into the program did become a problem because we lost our focus in a lot of ways.

Along with losing focus, those at the school site had problems with central office staff. Orlando Ortiz, who was worked on the district's BESP evaluation team, described the feedback from teachers and administrators about the "oppression" or "top-down management." He explained, "People who were used to functioning in a semi-autonomous framework were suddenly part of this whole process of the BESP." A three-year evaluation funded by the U.S. National Institute of Education¹⁶ concluded that "BESP did not produce 'comprehensive change' in the Berkeley school district; nothing in the data indicates that BESP even pointed the district in the direction of 'comprehensive change'" (1976, p. 2). Federal funds were withdrawn, BESP eventually ended, and some of these schools would later be closed for violation of the Civil Rights Act. From the perspective of a disillusioned evaluator, Orlando placed the blame on the federal government and local district for poor implementation and mismanagement of the program funding:

We spent weeks and then months in trainings and in workshops meeting with consultants and other levels of evaluation but not really engaging in anything that seemed productive. When we got to the schools, we began to question, 'Where is this money?' We're not seeing it in this schools. I'm here at Casa, at Odyssey, at Community... I'm not seeing the resources actually being placed at the disposal of the students, of the community, of the teachers. I am seeing (and we all were seeing) that we seem to have a lot of evaluators and consultants around.' There were some awfully nice state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment available. And the offices were nice but we didn't see that being translated to anything reflected in the resources available to the schools."

His description illustrates the growing managerialism of a bloated bureaucracy that responsible for overseeing the alternative schools, yet with very little oversight of the office itself. Tien (2019) analysis of the experience describes "a clear distinction and tension between the ideals and ambitions of the teachers who created the experimental schools and that of the district who created an apparatus of administrators, supervisors, and evaluators who were not there before."

These events foreshadow the enduring tension between autonomy versus bureaucracy, where a central system was needed to redistribute resources and regulate programs for universal access and funding, yet self-determination for grassroots constituents meant literally taking education into their own hands. It also demonstrates the influence of social movements on education reform, then and now, where schools are a key piece of redefining society in new terms.

Small Schools in Berkeley

Building on the legacy of experimental schools in Berkeley and the specialized programs that already existed in the high school, educators like Rick Ayers led the charge around small learning communities that would give more personalized learning experiences for teachers and students, with some schools centered on project-based learning. These conversations took shape in 2000, when Ayers and others envisioned more social justice pedagogy with a tighter knit community. This was at the height of focus and debates around the achievement gap between white students and students of

¹⁶ Abolished in 1985.

color in Berkeley Unified, propelled in part by Pedro Noguera's Diversity Project, former UC Berkeley professor and BUSD school board member. The documentary "School Colors" and accompanying book revealed the stratification that students face. A major backlash ensued. It launched a citywide conversation on race and with it a number of programmatic recommendations, including dividing BHS into small schools-within-a-school, each with racially and socioeconomically diverse demographics, to promote personalized instruction.

Tamara Friedman, long-time teacher and briefly an administrator at Berkeley High, found that the small schools reform, like the others that proceeded and followed it, stemmed more organically from the teachers themselves than central office.

I feel like in my experience it has all come from the school and even more that this all came from teachers and teacher leadership. And I can attest to the fact that being an administrator at Berkeley High School there's so little bandwidth to do anything other than keep children safe and do discipline. And keep the school running and do the sort of bureaucratic things that to me, in my experience, the vision, the implementation, the thinking of all the stuff around the reform efforts at Berkeley High School has really been generated from the ground up. The U9, the small schools, those kinds of things. Which is probably problematic in some ways. The district now is supporting us and on board, but it didn't come from them.

Small schools were officially established in Berkeley in 2005 after the school board unanimously voted to pass the Small Schools Initiative that created four small schools and one comprehensive program, Academic Choice. BAYCES, once again, served as the consultants on the project with Cary as the community engagement liaison. BAYCES facilitated a \$1.4 million grant that served as seed funding for new academies; however, this "localized small schools movement" as one newspaper called it (Berkeleyside) was not a grantee of the Gates Foundation. Instead these small schools were technically California Partnership Academies (CPAs) secured through state grants for high school programs preparing students for "college and career" readiness.

Victor Cary felt the political dynamics more intimately as a longtime Berkeley resident and African American man who understood the problems of his city. He described his hometown as a place where everyone voted for Barack Obama and identifies as progressive, but it despite the many "beautiful" parts to the community, racism has been an endemic problem. He proclaimed, "The first thing I will tell you is that I've been all over the country, including working in Mississippi. The most difficult and most challenging space I've ever worked in, in all the places I've been, is in Berkeley." He worked with BAYCES, an education intermediary that emerged during this time, to broker space between different various institutions: the district and school leaders, the community members and representative organization, and foundations. He had a comparative view working in both Oakland and Berkeley, and had to convince BAYCES director Steve Jubb to extend their small school project to the smaller, wealthier neighbor next door. Since Berkeley had "quite a different arrangement" than in Oakland, more stability and less churn, Victor was optimistic. That quickly turned into disillusion:

So I thought we had a fighting chance to get to the other side with Berkeley, given all the resources and progressiveness there. What I didn't get was [that] the White families, affluent families, are not going to put their children's education, perceived education at risk. We had to fight tooth and nail every step of the way. Then when the parents of color organized and tried to enroll, for instance, we want it for all of our children. In those days, John Powell's notion of targeted universalism hadn't caught hold yet. I wish I had that in my pocket back in the day.

But what was supposed to be a space for students of color to be in community with each other and a connection to home base classes, resulted in strong tracking and segregation within Berkeley High. Santiago Casal describes how Black and Latino students opted out of more academically rigorous academies because it was not welcoming for them:

Berkeley is a complicated place. Parents, the more affluent parents, are very adept at getting what they want in the schools. They can really turn out people and turn out money. Even the structure of Berkeley High in terms of the different programs here between Academic Choice and International Baccalaureate, CAS and the programs here. Black and brown students were not going into some of those [college prep] programs but they more tended to go to CAS where they'd get a lot of emotional and cultural support.

Former superintendent Bill Huyett (2008-2012) described how the “very siloed” organization of Berkeley High deepened stratification.

I think that especially in the secondary schools, the haves and the have nots got treated differently. When I looked at the high school, it was really interesting. They had several small schools, then they had the IB school, and they had Academic Choice, I think they called it, which was everybody else. And it tended to segregate kids. The small schools ended up being schools of kids of color and the IB school tended to be kids that were more Caucasian and professors' kids. So in a sense, having the smaller breakdown of a school that's 3,000 is a good idea. I wondered sometimes about what was the purpose of it and was that really good to be so siloed? It was a very siloed structure. The one thing that I was always lobbying to change was let there be some flow between them, which there wasn't much of. [...] If you got into one of the small schools of 250 kids, all your classes were just there. There's very little that you could experience elsewhere. I'm not sure that was really the best thing for kids. I'd like to see them stretched a little bit and to be able to have more opportunity.

The momentum around small schools, and even earlier pushback around the achievement gap, could have propelled into charter schools like it did in Oakland. Tamara described how the charter school *movement* remained a mere *moment* in Berkeley, with only one charter school in the district that has since closed. She was briefly involved with early charter school conversations in the mid-90s as a new teacher, describing herself as “I wanted to be in with the cool teachers that were doing cool things,” which involved other teachers working towards a charter school that never came to fruition. Tamara’s early involvement showed that there was enough commitment to be continue within the district, spurring more interest in a different reform, small schools:

It was at the time [when] the charter school moment was just starting. So it was almost like before it was known that charter schools were either going to be a good or bad word. It was more neutral. [...] But it was more like, “We have a different view of what education can be. And they've said we can do this thing called charter schools. And let's go do it.” And then that didn't happen. And actually, small schools evolved a little bit around that it was more like “no, no, no let's keep it in.” It has definitely always been my experience. It has been considered not an option in Berkeley — we wouldn't do that. Because it doesn't embrace everyone. [...] I just remember that when the charter school movement started to grow I do remember conversations around we don't want a school that's just going to pull some kids.

She credited a strong K-8 school system where there is a commitment to “heterogeneity” and access “to all schools for all kids.” Recalling her own experiences, “I grew up from a very young age understanding that public education was the most important thing. And so to say ‘charter’ just didn’t fit within that and I think a lot of people in Berkeley feel that.”

Small schools were maintained as a local, teacher-driven project in large part because they were not funded by the Gates Foundation. Not being dependent on philanthropic funding marked a major difference between small schools movements in Berkeley and Oakland, and why Berkeley did not expand market options.

Who was funding the megaphones?

The small schools serve as a prime example of each district’s priorities because both were engaged in the reform movement in the early 2000s. Oakland quickly became ground zero on the West Coast for venture philanthropy initiatives, and the urgency among educators to try a more radical approach to support low-income students of color created an early impetus for experimentation. Meanwhile, it took convincing, as Victor Cary detailed, to get BAYCES and the Gates Foundation to extend the project to Berkeley. It made sense in many ways given Berkeley’s rich tradition of experimental and alternative schools. Furthermore, there had also been growing concern about student of color outcomes and belonging in Berkeley Unified. Meanwhile, Oakland was ripe for the small schools project to be fulfilled when state administrator Randy Ward, under the direction of state superintendent Jack O’Connell, doubled the number of small schools between 2003 and 2007. And what followed was also telling: Berkeley administrators and teachers have moved back towards a universal model due to segregation and unequal educational conditions within Berkeley High while Oakland went deeper into privatization by turning to charter schools.

Governance 2020: Between Public and Private

In comparing the evolution of district structures, I interrogate the role of crisis narratives in shaping the political and organizational changes in education reform efforts. Distinct visions and strategies are reflected in each district’s governance structure: BUSD leaders worked to centralize a desegregation strategy through district-managed student attendance zones while OUSD leaders decentralized pedagogical and organizational reform at the school level through public-private partnerships. In addition to political economic factors like state disinvestment, property values, and university support, White and affluent parents “buffered” Berkeley from entrenched marketization in their commitment to the public good. While each district took divergent strategies to improving financial pressures and social inequities in shifting political contexts, they each are filled with nuanced pockets of counter-hegemony and sub-hegemony that reify and challenge market ideas (Sum, 2004, 2005). Drawing on assemblage theory in education governance, the context-specific examples of translations and refusals of hegemonic politics illuminate the limits and contradictions of neoliberalism (Wilkins, 2018).

In Oakland Unified, the portfolio strategy has had two iterations of implementation shaped by “crisis” narratives: first, the state takeover, followed by pushback from communities of color about their school closures. The 2003 receivership created a policy window for portfolio governance to take root in Oakland with the support of BAYCES’ Steve Jubb and ideas taken from Paul Hill and colleagues at the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), an independent research center now housed at the University of Washington Bothell. A critical part of their blueprint depended on the churn in school openings and closures (charter, district, and small schools), which deepened stakeholders’ frustration with not only the district, but also furthered mistrust of philanthropists. Once the school board regained most of its decision-making authority from the state in 2009, portfolio advocates inside and outside of the district turned to select forms of

democratic engagement to garner buy-in from families with the most at stake in the district redesign efforts.

In Berkeley Unified, district leaders drew on strategies to improve and innovate local public schools that relied on local ideas and capacity rather than private contracting. Building on other factors like smaller population, higher wealth, and a prestigious public university, Berkeley had the civic capacity to cultivate innovative and equity-oriented strategic plans within the district, such as integration, small schools, and now the Universal 9th grade, where the entire freshman class take four core courses together as opposed separating them into different academies right from the beginning. The 2020 Vision, a city-district initiative to close the achievement gap, was an ambitious project that relied on civic and institutional partnerships at the local level rather than a network of venture philanthropies, policy entrepreneurs, and intermediaries. However, despite early excitement from a dedicated multiracial coalition of leaders, it did not reach many of its goals besides elect school board members who support an ambiguously-defined equity platform.

Oakland: Portfolio Model

Attempts to “unify” district and charter operations are in part a response to nearly three decades of educational marketization. Amid much disagreement about causes and strategies, there is a general consensus among stakeholders that the current situation in Oakland Unified — fiscally, academically, organizationally — is not serving its diverse communities. The portfolio strategy, in theory, is supposed to create coherence and spur innovation (Hill et al., 2001). In this section, I outline the components of the portfolio strategy, codified through the school board’s Community of Schools Policy in June 2018, and consider what other unintended policy consequences need to be considered from the Oakland case. The architects of the portfolio district in Oakland advanced select initiatives, like common enrollment and results-based budgeting, as a means to improve school district funding, district-charter relations, and educational outcomes among Black and Latinx students. Nonetheless, the intention for the district to regulate charter schools falls short in practice because charter law is determined by the state legislature.

Manufacturing Consent for Portfolio Markets: From “War of Maneuver” to “War of Position”

The implementation of the portfolio district in OUSD took multiple attempts and new governing arrangements, from a “war of maneuver” to a “war of position” (Gramsci, 1971). First, the state takeover of Oakland Unified in 2003 created a policy window that spurred private contracting among its public schools, manufacturing a political moment that suspended democratic participation under fiscal crisis. Second, once district and school board directors re-gained (most) decision-making authority in 2009, they continued to develop portfolio initiatives like school closures, budget cuts, and common enrollment to keep the district “financially solvent.” The state takeover allowed non-district actors to introduce the portfolio approach, but it was school board members’ approval that sustained the initiatives advanced by a series of ideologically diverse superintendents between 2009 and 2019. GO Public Schools, established in 2007 during the state takeover, is an education reform advocacy organization (ERAO) that grew to become a critical force in educational politics and advocacy in Oakland (see Chapter 7 for further discussion of *education regimes*). After years of supporting charter school expansion, garnering philanthropic funding from Michael Bloomberg among other venture capitalists, cultivating and politicizing school board candidates, and attempting to outreach to African American communities, the organization turned to support the new In 2017, GO launched the 1Oakland Campaign, and in 2018, the board passed the “Community of Schools” policy.

Leaders at GO and in OUSD employed a *discursive strategy* to garner public consent for the reform (Anderson & Donchik, 2016). The name itself has changed since it was introduced as district legislation and debated for over six months in 2018. These changes in policy name suggest that advocates were distancing the project from its business origins, instead opting to use more community-oriented or civic language. Then-board president James Harris spoke about the “Quality School Portfolio” in February of that year, but in April he introduced it as the “System of Schools.” It was passed (5-2) on June 27, 2018 as the “Community of Schools” policy, which created some confusion since the district has a separate “community schools” policy for full-service wraparound supports. The intention to frame this reform as a community-based project is quite different from its investment portfolio inspiration. Advocates inside and outside of the district have also evoked language about unifying the city. The superintendent’s messages commonly refer to it as a “citywide plan,” and GO Public Schools’ political campaign around creating an OUSD portfolio is named “1Oakland.” Whatever the name, portfolio proponents are clear not to use its original name. As Director Harris told *Chalkbeat*, he attended a CRPE conference a few years back where his “biggest takeaway [was] don’t use the word ‘portfolio’ because it’s such a hot button” (Barnum, 2018). As evidenced in the board members attending CRPE conference, many of whom were endorsed and funded by GO Public Schools, the portfolio strategy is far from an organic idea that some proponents claim. Instead, it has been cultivated through consent-generating community engagement strategies that have made a hegemonic idea more palatable to local actors.

Results-Based Budgeting (2004-2014) and Expect Success (2005-2008). Foundations, local and national, were key to earlier attempts at “redesigning” the district through two complementary initiatives. The “Expect Success” program was a multi-pronged initiative that included the division of central office into instruction and operations departments, expansion of school choice to “two quality school options” per neighborhood, and targeted support and accountability for employees (Statham, 2007). With a more specific purpose, the “Results-Based Budgeting” policy gave principals more discretion over spending as well as options to purchase from a wider market of suppliers, such as curriculum and consulting. These “autonomy-focused” initiatives that spurred marketization took place during the state receivership under state administrator Randy Ward’s leadership. Ward was one of many administrators trained by the market-oriented Broad Academy that would go on to serve in leadership positions in Oakland Unified, along with Matt Hill, a Broad Resident serving as Director and Program Manager of Expect Success from 2005 to 2007 (The Broad Center, 2020).

At the local level, philanthropies like the Rogers Family Foundation, a local foundation focused “on transforming public education in Oakland, California,” was founded in 2003 — the same year that the receivership began. Brian Rogers^{17, 20} CEO of the Rogers Family Foundation and son of its founder, explained the opportunities made possible with the transition from an elected, representative school board to a state administrator:

We came in right when the state receivership was happening. I think we saw it as an opportunity where, on one hand, it was terrible. [...] On the other hand, when that happens, it makes it extremely easy to make decisions that are very tough for a superintendent. The politics get stripped out of it. We saw it as an opportunity to try and change the district in some ways.

¹⁷ Brian Rogers had previously ran for school board unsuccessfully in 2008. He was endorsed by the organization he founded, GO Public Schools.

He then reframed his foundation's involvement as being "supportive of the district" by holding fundraisers for the Expect Success initiative. This reform was an "effort that came in and tried to reorganize schools, give a little bit more autonomy to principals, try to create more of a services-based economy where school sites were able to manage their resources more, maybe purchase services from outside of the districts, create a marketplace." He noted that this was opposed by "traditional education organizations," like the teachers' union, as well as district leaders. In addition to local philanthropy, national foundations like the Gates and Broad foundations were also involved in the project, giving 10 million and six million dollars, respectively. Rogers' marketplace framing is quite different from how state administrator Ward framed RBB as an "equitable distribution of resources" in a Gates Foundation's 2004 press release. Ward's implementation of RBB was lauded by local media for having "righted a decades-old wrong when he changed the way individual schools were funded, making sure Oakland's worst schools got just as much money for teachers as its best" (Gammon, 2006, p. 1).

However, these projects received criticism from stakeholders, particularly those already critical of the state takeover. One journalist for the *Berkeley Daily Planet*, J. Douglas Allen-Taylor investigated the Expect Success program in 2006, finding grant proposals and other documents that revealed how philanthropists maintained a strong influence over the direction of the project. Written into the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2005 grant proposal, for example, was a mandate that funds could be withheld or terminated if the foundation did not approve of "significant leadership changes" within Oakland Unified. The district-written funding proposal revealed Ward's concerns after he would leave his state-appointed position, and urged that the designers should "expect to complete the [Expect Success] change process while the district is under state control, and it will be difficult to dismantle the new design completely" (para. 4). The proposal was indiscreet about their plans to outsource district jobs and services held by unionized employees, which labor leaders called a form of "union busting":

One portion of the Expect Success! proposal appears to call directly for the replacement of unionized workers, indicating that one of the areas of the project "focuses on service areas with high potential cost savings, yet which face potential union and legal challenges: Custodial, Building & Grounds and Food Services. All three areas generally demonstrate poor cost performance and provide low to moderate quality service. External service providers are also strong options for all three areas... (para. 6)

Board Director Greg Hodge defended the plan back in 2006, pointing to the ways it actually built off the projects started under Superintendent Chaconas (who was ousted in 2003). Admitting that reorganizing central office is a "radical" idea, he stated, "We need a central office that is responsive, nimble, and not so top-heavy," even if that meant it would get done under a state administrator. The newspaper also noted that, "Hodge said he took a seat on BayCES' board of directors so that he could have a voice with OUSD administrator Ward 'in a way that wasn't happening in my role as a school board member' following the state takeover" (para. 24). A sign of the neoliberalization of politics, sitting on the board of directors of a non-profit held more power in education reform than serving a school board member.

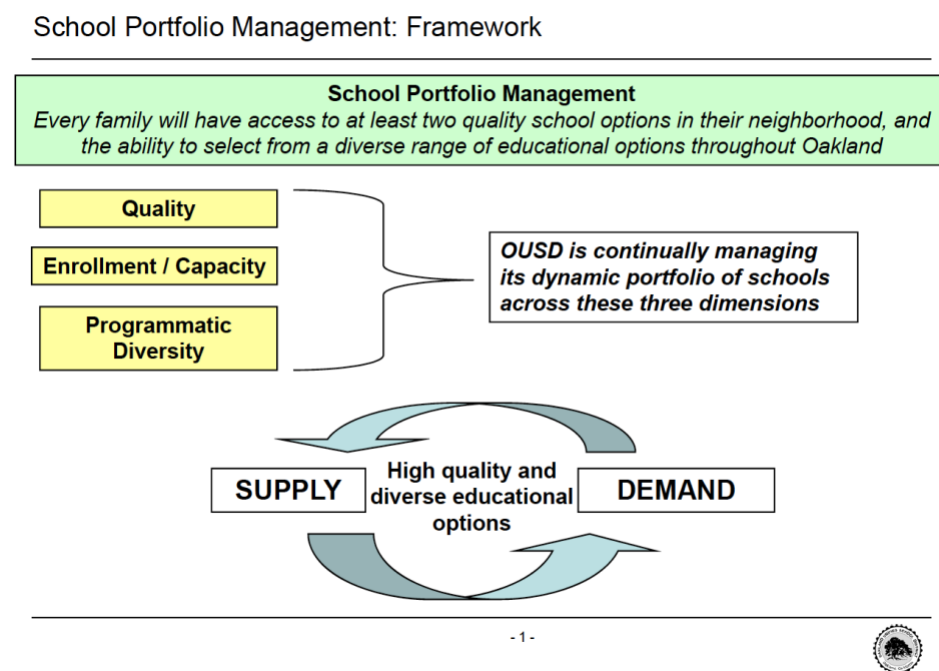
In the spring of 2007, while OUSD was still under receivership, state-appointed officials created a Department of School Portfolio Management inside of the district, back when the relatively-unknown initiative did not carry such a negative connotation to the public. The hiring

documents for the coordinator position¹⁸ indicate that this position explicitly involved building relationships with external and regulating the charter office as outlined in the role's essential responsibilities:

1. Support and inform Strategy Group decision-making with regard to which schools should exist within the district's portfolio of schools and what levels of differentiated support, monitoring and intervention each school should receive
2. Ensure that all charter school oversight responsibilities (authorizing, renewal, closures, oversight, fiscal and legal compliance, service level agreements, etc.) are aligned with the broader School Portfolio Management strategic work.
3. Manage relationships with all external school model providers interested in opening schools within or providing services to the district.

Figure 5 shows a presentation from December 13, 2006 included a conceptual map of the model's theory of action, which illustrates the supply and demand idea core to district improvement.

FIGURE 5. Expect Success (Portfolio of Schools) Framework



¹⁸ These positions were funded by Targeted Instructional Improvement Grants (TIIG) from the California Department of Education, which were intended to cover “the costs of court-ordered and voluntary desegregation programs and to provide for instructional improvement for the lowest achieving pupils in the district” (CDE, 2019; OUSD, 2009).

In a 2009 evaluation conducted by Stanford University's School Redesign Network (and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), identifies OUSD as a burgeoning portfolio district under the Expect Success banner:

By theory of action, we refer to the policy features of OUSD's Expect Success reform initiative, which commits to developing a portfolio of schools that will provide every family with at least two quality school options in their neighborhood and the ability to select from a diverse range of educational options throughout Oakland. One of the key underpinnings of this model is that schools will be given the autonomy to innovate and be responsive to the needs of their communities while the district concurrently adopts a "service" economy orientation that allows schools to purchase services from the district or other providers based on local needs.

Autonomy, innovation, and responsiveness guided the transformation of the district into an education market that introduced competing providers into the fold.

However, these ambitious plans soon fell short. The decade-long RBB initiative received mixed results over the year, including principals' complaints about deepening inequities in the district (Sullivan, 2014), while Expect Success did not continue once the grant ended after three years (but the school portfolio management coordinator position had its funding extended). The Gates Foundation also pulled its multi-million-dollar funding of small schools in 2008, right before the board regained its power in 2009. In leaving the district in disarray, attempts at marketization through a "service economy" lost some consent among government officials tasked with carrying it out. In response to the ambitious three-year goal of district reorganization, Board President David Kakishiba said that the district personnel carrying out Expect Success "must be high" to expect such a radical redesign of central office in so little time (Allen-Taylor, 2006, para. 16). However, Rogers explains the lasting influence of this earlier version of the portfolio strategy:

I think there was a huge pushback from the community on everything that Ward was trying to do. I think that there was a definite resistance that was created by the teacher's union. As Ward was trying to institute these new internal policies, slowly but surely, the district was getting the power back to make their own decisions. So, then, the school board took over. I think a lot of the work on kind of the service economy kind of ended. But the work around the autonomies in the small schools continued to go forward underneath the school board when they received the power.

Working quickly under state takeover, elite policy actors comprising the *hegemonic bloc* made major inroads in transforming the purpose of schools through initiatives like Expect Success and RBB. They understood that the coercive strategy of suspending democratic, local oversight of urban public schools had a time limit. New school incubation was one way to generate buy-in and enthusiasm for district redesign.

Key Aspects

In a presentation to the school board on November 14, 2018, Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell and Sondra Aguilera, Deputy Chief of Continuous School Improvement, presented their "community of schools citywide plan" to the school board, displayed in Figure 6. Again, "community of schools" (not to be confused with "community schools") and "citywide" is OUSD language for portfolio strategy. They worked with consultants to create a five-year "citywide map"

that would be a comprehensive strategy to project enrollment patterns, facilities capacity, charter partnerships, and quality school standards. Essentially, it served as a “a footprint” of how students can best navigate OUSD’s neighborhood and school choice options.

The language in the OUSD vision and mission were fairly neutral, which still, confusingly, identifies a “full service community district” despite the fact that wraparound programs in district schools today are a vestige of a previous superintendent’s strategic plan. It was in the key “principles” that revealed Oakland’s take on a portfolio district: fiscal vitality and sustainability (“we need fewer, better resourced schools with larger enrollment”), and equity and access (“access to quality schools closer to home” and “regional feeder patterns from pre-K through high school”).

Figure 6: OUSD Board of Education’s Community of School Policy

Community of Schools Policy (BP 6006)

A Citywide Plan grounded in policy: Asset Management, Charter Authorization, Enrollment, Equity, Results Based Budgeting, School Governance, and Quality School Development		
A	Facilities	Best leverage vacant, underutilized, and surplus properties and utilize facility use agreements to strategically engage all Oakland public schools-district or charter; identify high quality options for academic programs
B	Enrollment & Transportation	Work with all Oakland public schools district or charter - to better articulate feeder patterns across Oakland to ensure more predictability for families.
C	Charter Authorization	Strengthen our role in oversight and accountability to ensure that all charter schools operating in Oakland are providing a high quality education and working to address inequities.
D	Access to Equitable & Quality Education for all	Share best practices across all Oakland public schools, (e.g., professional development, recruitment and retention of educators) that improve equitable educational access for all Oakland students.
E	Defined Autonomies	Best support continued innovation within OUSD schools and accelerate the number of high-quality school options within OUSD

In other words, the portfolio district is a mechanism for “right-sizing” the number of schools, that is, justifying school closures for a district with too many schools, as leaders have argued. The Broad Foundations even wrote a handbook in 2009 on “right sizing” that operationalized this process of school closures (2009). As scholar-activist and long-time Oakland educator Dr. Kitty Kelly Epstein said that this talk of ‘too many schools’ has been a part of the conversation since “forever.” More specifically, she pinpointed the emergence of FCMAT in the late 1990s and early 2000s in that problem framing:

[FCMAT] started coming to board meetings and saying "Oakland has too many schools, look this is the numbers in other districts." The school board said, "We choose to have that many schools, that's our choice. It's not up to you." People would explain that the only thing you get by closing a school is a principal ... That's the only money you save. We wanted small schools, that's why we have them. Leave us alone. It's not up to you. But now they're back on it again and people aren't resisting this hard because we have a lot of educating to do again because that time was a long time ago.

However, the superintendent and central office staff made sure to reiterate that the process was NOT about school closures. Working with JACOBS and Cooperative Strategies, architectural firm and facilities planning consultants, they created a model that would “right-size” the district. First, the facility capacity analysis inquired, “What is the minimum number of schools we need based on where students go to school and the seat capacity of our existing facilities?” Then, the location

allocation analysis asked, “where are the optimal locations for schools based on where students live, and how far away are our existing facilities?” Figuring out the prime location of school sites would determine school consolidations and relocations — “not closures!” the staff emphasized. One model they used started from a “clean slate,” imagining that these intergenerational institutions simply did not exist to figure out ideal attendance areas.

Their analyses led them to conclude that “we need fewer schools based on how many students will go to our schools” and they identified schools in East Oakland and elementary schools across the city especially concentrated. They also pointed out that “most OUSD school facilities are already close to an optimal location, giving us many options to utilize current facilities and inform the Citywide Map,” thus, justifying leasing district facilities for other purposes (see Chapter 5 on housing development on district property). In the following sections, I review the five key areas of the district’s plan (facilities, enrollment, charter authorization, school choice access, and defined autonomies), followed by the unofficial policies and practices that have been affected by the attempted governance restructuring.

A.) Facilities. The inequality of OUSD is mapped onto the school facilities, where there is a divide between wealthy and under-resourced communities that are generally distributed spatially in the hills or the flatlands (although gentrification has changed these geopolitics). Andrea Dawson has a long experience in facilities management having worked as a senior project manager for other districts while working with OUSD as a consultant and then later as a volunteer bond oversight committee for years. Dawson, a White woman, was intrigued by school facilities after working with a minority-owned construction company that just won a contract with OUSD. She asked to be assigned to the district schools in the higher poverty flatlands, an experience that illuminated the savage inequalities within the same school system:

What I saw is a vast difference between facilities below 580 [freeway] and facilities above 580. And it was mind-boggling.... playgrounds that had a lot more pot holes and were in disrepair. Fences that needed to be repaired. Hallways that were only half-lit that had water stains on the ceilings from roofs not being repaired. Broken windows. Windows that were actually screwed shut in the classrooms so there would only be one exit in a fire, and that would be to a hallway. I remember that distinctly in one school.

While the poor conditions and benign neglect were more common in low-income schools, there were other similar schools that functioned better:

What made me start to think of what made some schools in the flatlands better than others, in my mind, was the structure of the school's administration. And in that school, the teachers, the principal, and the custodians, everyone was on the same page as far as what their goal was: It was to teach kids and keep them safe. So they all had the same mantra, so much so that that school was clean. And their playground was clean. They all had positive attitudes, but there was zero tolerance, yet they were tolerant, if you know what I mean.

In schools that were highly dysfunctional, which also tended to have a high proportion of students with severe special needs, Dawson noted a correlation between poor facilities maintenance and school leadership that lacked a common goal. In turn, the staff, leaders, and parents lacked capacity and social capital compared to affluent parents in the hills who had the time to commit to advocating for their school, where “200 parents can come out to a PTA meeting and demand from the district that they need a new play structure.” Her work took an advocacy turn in trying to get the same facilities’ consideration across race and class lines, and for safe and clean school conditions.

Conversations with various stakeholders about portfolio governance often circled back to “capacity”: what space and resources are available at each school. As I explained in Chapter 5, maintenance of facilities is inequitable because of the unequal tax income between districts. But even wealthier districts can have problems raising additional funds through bond measures if the public ultimately does not trust local government officials with their money. Dawson explained these issues in leadership and public trust:

[In] Oakland, there's always been such great need to just run out and fix the windows, and the leaky roof, and the vandalism. They have two things going on: they're always in crisis, and they don't have a visionary chief. They've never had a visionary chief that, basically, looks at a model program, say from a neighboring community like San Francisco Unified, takes the time to implement it, and says to staff, “This is what we're gonna do, and if you don't like it, this is not the place for you to develop.” And that has not happened ever in Oakland as long as I've been there.

In crisis, leaders are putting out fires rather than long-term planning, which ends up costing the district more money down the road. These crises have been the impetus for public-private partnerships and other forms of privatization. As I analyzed in the previous chapter, both districts are under financial pressure, but Oakland has little civic capacity and financial support to buffer its institutions from austerity measures. Even the district’s administrative building has subleased its office space to the Oakland Public Education Fund, a close intermediary partner, to save on skyrocketing rent in downtown Oakland.

Making space for charter schools has been contentious issue since they started popping up in Oakland in the 1990s. Charter school administrators have to budget for rent costs, while districts in California have to provide surplus buildings to share with charter students. Proposition 39 was passed in 2000 requiring that “that public school facilities should be shared fairly among all public school pupils, including those in charter schools.” It lowered the threshold for state or local district to pass facilities bonds from a two-thirds voter approval to 55 percent in exchange for granting charter school greater access to public facilities (with some eligibility requirements). The California Charter School Association framed it as an “equity” issue:

The principle behind Prop. 39 is one of equity and fairness for all public school students, irrespective of whether they attend public district schools or public charter schools in their communities. Charter school students are public school students. Prop. 39 represents the tangible, pragmatic embodiment of that principle in the most publicly visible sign of a successful school - the building. (“Overview,” 2020, para. 5)

Facilities are a major part of students’ educational experience, and for charter advocates, having space in the schoolhouse is an assertion that they, too, are a public school. Proposition 39 was updated in 2003 around the quality of facilities provided to charter schools, mandating that they be “reasonably equivalent” to those used by district students. It also gave charter providers preference on location, which has led to a high concentration of schools in some areas, and a “desert” in others.

Even the Alameda Civil Grand Jury (described by one participant as “a weird vigilante-type institution” comprised by an entirely White jury) strongly recommended that OUSD close schools and rent the facilities to charter schools. That was deeply problematic for Director Shanthi Gonzales:

If we open up more facilities to charter schools, that's just going to increase the declining enrollment and OUSD, which is not fiscally responsible. These people did not have any real understanding of the issues and the complexity that we're facing in Oakland. We can't just close a bunch of schools because guess what, if we close 10 schools, 10 charter schools will open up in that same exact location next year. It is so intensely complex and people have no idea of the complexity that goes into like how many moving parts there are, you pull out one thread over here and it affects something else.

Her comments have been repeated by many public education activists that have pointed to the relationship between decreasing charter enrollment and increasing district enrollment. FCMAT and other county and state entities have pressured OUSD to be more fiscally responsible, with contradictory recommendations to lease or sell public land. “Parent Trigger” laws (discussed in Chapter 5) have had a direct impact on Oakland, where Lazear and Ascend were converted to charter schools and had a right to the facility of the formerly district-operated school.

The portfolio strategy is one way that OUSD is attempting to mitigate these issues. As I described above, the district hired consultants to help with enrollment projections for their “capacity analysis.” Before the Blueprint For Quality Schools turned into a community engagement process (discussed in more detail later in this chapter), it was primarily a facilities master plan to assess district infrastructure, buildings, and programs. Dirk Tillotson, school choice advocate, said that the facilities analysis in Blueprint For Quality Schools could be considered a portfolio approach because it involves “looking at community needs and then redesigning educational experiences around those [through] a geographical focus.” According to him, this is long overdue:

It should've happened probably two, or three, or five years ago. It's smart, it all makes sense to strategically analyze what you should be doing and then design a portfolio of schools that kind of accomplish the result. It's just the idea to the execution is a long road and it hasn't been accomplished often.

For Tillotson, this is long overdue. However, the Blueprint Process’ focus on district and charter unity does not change the fact that board and superintendent only have provision over district schools, meaning that scrutiny around school “capacity” will fall on district schools.

B.) Enrollment. Along with facilities and public property, enrollment is a key part of determining a district capacity. Charter schools have impacted the enrollment in district schools, where the fiscal impact of their declining attendance has put a major dent in school districts’ revenue. As the charter school sector continues to grow, districts have grappled with ways to oversee and regulate these autonomous schools following issues of mismanagement (Green, Baker, Oluwole, & Mead, 2015) and access (Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig, 2002). The tension between charter school advocates and district leadership is illustrated in this excerpt from a charter advocacy policy brief:

“What can be done to intervene in the collision course we appear to be on when an emerging charter-school sector sometimes seems to threaten or undermine the functioning of district-sponsored public education, and when some of the key stakeholders in district-sponsored education appear determined to undercut or even destroy charter schools?” (Rofes, 2005)

With support from the Gates Foundation and the Center for Reinventing Public Education, District-Charter Collaboration Compacts have emerged as one solution for over twenty-three cities

(CRPE, n.d.) by providing non-peer reviewed research, policy reports, and consulting for district leaders. District-charter collaboration compacts are non-binding formal agreements between school districts and charter schools that outline how both sectors will share resources and responsibilities while ensuring equal access to high-quality schools for all students in the district. These initiatives are a type of public-private partnership built on cross-sector collaboration among government and private sector leaders and organizations, particularly foundations, in delivering services and funding. District-charter compacts, like other market-based reforms, are justified as financially and organizationally efficient, and more recently, as a means to improve equitable outcomes for poor students and students of color (CRPE, 2017). Unlike other market-based reforms, these compacts emphasize government provision and regulation by bringing a renewed sense of purpose to school districts.

OUSD launched their version of a district-charter compact called the Oakland Public Schools Pledge (originally the “Equity Pledge”) in 2015, and a “common enrollment” system was soon introduced to streamline school enrollment through one application for both district and charter schools. Broad-trained superintendent Antwan Wilson’s said at the time, “Having a system that is as easy as possible and that doesn’t require them to go through multiple steps to enroll is important. And that’s not a pro-charter strategy; that is a pro-child strategy” (Bay Area News Group, 2016). However, following strong community resistance, the policy was not passed by the board in 2016. There were many disappointed people, particularly those in the portfolio regime, like Dirk Tillotson, who felt that this was a missed opportunity. Through his many experiences as a charter school lawyer and school choice non-profit founder, Tillotson felt privy to insight on the pros and cons of each sector and saw the potential in sharing universal practices while maintaining certain autonomies for charter schools. He explained:

I think the restorative justice work would be another area where we have done some cross-sector work that's actually been valuable. But it's few and far between, that promise just hasn't really played out. I just think it takes a lot more time and energy to make it happen than people thought it would. Nobody has put the time in investing what's like the back office to making the best practices really happen versus "Do school visit! Talk to the school leaders! Here's how they did it! Do it!" This is how it happens right now, at the best.

As Tillotson and allies pushed for “unity” and a common enrollment plan, there was fierce — and organized — backlash from the teachers union and parent advocacy organization Parents United. Keith Brown, OEA president, reported his concerns in his affiliate’s newsletter back then, “If common enrollment comes to Oakland, I see enrollment at public schools continuing to decrease at more rapid rates. We will lose funding for programs that support all students” (Walker, 2016). Former OEA President Trish Gorham was even more blunt about the need to be ready to resist the policy given that “common enrollment is the new chapter in the privatizer’s playbook and they won’t give it up easily.” She said that the common enrollment policy had “no teeth to it,” pointing to the silent resistance from the charter community: “I don’t think charter schools feel any urgent need to divulge how they operate to the public, to be better actors in the community.”

Kim Davis, co-founder of Parents United, expressed the process by which community members were excluded from forming the initiative was as frustrating as the plan itself:

So with common enrollment, it's a perfect example of inauthentic by design. It was intended to be that way. So, they decided what they wanted was common enrollment, and they met in secret. They had their steering committee with all of their high level people and nobody else through the spring, and they created a report about “How our enrollment systems were

broken and how we really needed to do this and by the way, we should also include charters in this because it's more fair.” So, they had this proposal and then they started the engagements. You're asking me at that point to approve what you've done. You're not asking me for what I think.

Once again, regime leaders’ were more interested in garnering consent for a plan that was already in place. Davis also noted the influence of intermediary organizations like GO Public Schools and Educate78, the latter of which invested \$300,000 into the initial outreach and development of the common enrollment initiative:

External organizations paid for the whole thing and they ran the engagements. So that was an external district process for an internal district initiative that went very badly. That's the reason why they had so much pushback from common enrollment was because of the way that it was done. Had they done it differently, I don't know if we would've had the same level of response.

Even supporters of the Equity Pledge and common enrollment saw the problems with their roll out. Tillotson sat on the steering committee for the Equity Pledge, which was “basically dead,” and saw these problems from the start:

I always thought it was a bunch of shit once we started. In all these meetings, there would be more consultants than district staff around the table. District staff would come in and they'd cancel a minute before the meeting. Sometimes, literally, 2:59 you have a 3:00 meeting get an email: “Oh, the meeting's canceled.” They never wanted to do it, deep down. The charters, again, never really wanted to do it.

Despite the lack of interest from central office and charter administrators, Tillotson still saw some positive movement come out of the failed effort: “Right now you can see charters and district schools side by side in a way that you wouldn't be able to if we didn't do that work before.” He pointed to improvements in the district’s enrollment office, such as the introduction of the online application, and the charter schools unifying with their own common application system in parallel to the district’s. These steps would not have happened without the Pledge, which brought people together to discuss shared issues. “Even if it didn't reach its desired end it got to a halfway point that's better than where it was before,” he argued, “They can't go back on the common enrollment stuff because families like it, and the more families get used to it the more families demand from it. I feel like the momentum's there, they are stuck, in a good way.”

C.) Charter Authorization & Oversight. One point of pushback on the “Community of Schools” portfolio initiative is that state regulations limit the power that districts. It is difficult for district to close charters because of the multi-level appeal process. Critics fear traditional public schools will bear the brunt of that burden. “You can’t close charter schools, so we know this policy will only apply to public schools,” said Mike Hutchinson, founder of Oakland Public Education Network. It is something the board took note of in a later draft of their “Community of Schools” Policy:

The Board is acutely aware of the legal constraints that limit its formal authority. Current state law does not currently allow the Board comprehensive authority on the location, authorization, oversight, and management of charter schools in Oakland. However, the Board is committed to establishing more high-quality school programs and understands that

this vision will not come without fiscal, legislative, and political challenges. The Board is prepared for the journey ahead and is committed to advocating for legislative changes that will result in greater and more effective control of the regulatory environment in which the school district operates. (Board memo, 11/14/18)

California, once the frontier of charter expansion, is now at the forefront of regulation. In 2019, state legislators padded assembly bills 1505 and 1506 which bring more power to districts by limiting county and the state boards that overrule charter renewal decisions.

D.) Access to Equitable and Quality Education For All. The turnover of school leaders, educators, and students due to a consistent churn in opening and closing of schools is an inevitable part of the portfolio process that has created instability, argue some stakeholders. The school closures over the past 15 years have been disproportionately Black, where 16 out of the 18 schools closed had populations with more than 60 percent African American students (J4OS, 2019). While charter advocates and community members discussed the potential of opening new schools in advocating support of their charter petition, other parents, teachers, and students demanded and pleaded to reinvest in their neighborhood schools to stave off closure. Sometimes these interrelated issues appear as distinct agenda items within the same school board meeting. In pursuit of establishing “access to equitable and quality education for all,” the debate between school choice versus feeder patterns continues to divide families and teachers.

Former OUSD teacher and Alameda County Board Supervisor Marlon McWilson outlined how the open enrollment policy implemented in 2006 under state administrator Ward fostered school closures, with particular negative consequences for the historically African American neighborhood of West Oakland:

And so, McClymonds as a whole, suffers the brunt of people leaving the district, or leaving the area every single day to get educated in other places. So, in one point there were about seven hundred students leaving the zip code every day to go other places. Whether that was Emeryville Unified, Berkeley Unified, Oakland Tech High School, Oakland High, or Skyline High School. The fact that you would have a student from West Oakland that will catch a bus, BART, take two buses and do whatever to get to Skyline High School, was ridiculous to me. But, you have things like open enrollment, where you think in principle, this is a great idea. You can send your kid to any school in the city, but it actually punishes the local schools. So, local neighborhood schools are suffering from open enrollments. Everybody's trying to get to Tech and every place else, because they think the education is better. But the reality of the situation is, McClymonds is doing a far greater job of educating black students than they are at Oakland Tech, because Oakland Tech is tracking students because Oakland Tech students are not getting the same resources, the same support, they're not getting the same attention to detail, and they are also being pushed to the wayside.

Ultimately, at the core of the portfolio strategy and other forms of district governance are meanings associated with school communities. The portfolio strategy is more than “restructuring” a district’s central office; rather, it is reorganizing the relationship between communities and schools. The notion of school “feeder patterns” is particularly illuminating in this regard. It is useful here to conceptualize “feeder patterns” as something more than a technical district policy; it involves actively supporting the pathways between neighborhood schools across grade levels. As Nidya Baez, OUSD alum and principal, pointed out, district leaders disregarded “feeder patterns” that used to provide a stream of enrollment in her neighborhood high school, Fremont. In her experience, open enrollment and school choice “damaged” her school because it cut the paths connecting families

between neighborhood schools. School choice advocacy is grounded in the idea that students from under resourced communities should not be constrained by their zip code. What is ignored are the ties solidified by feeder patterns; some working-class families want the option to attend another school, yet others do, in fact, want their neighborhood school with more resources and academic opportunities. This enduring tension between equity as moving to where opportunity exists versus equity as supporting disinvested places is made clear in the Oakland case.

E.) Defined Autonomies & Innovation: Incubation and Turnaround. The last area of OUSD’s “Community of Schools” Policy centers on support for “innovation” within its public schools and to “accelerate high-quality options.” The decades of experimentation with governance and finance described in this chapter led to different twists on innovation, one that mixed “incubation” with “turnaround” efforts incentivized under the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. These federal policies made more explicit that academic failure justified experimentation in working class schools, whose staff and communities needed to reform or would face punitive consequences like closure.

BAYCES, the local arm of a national non-profit, served as the intermediary that would house trainings and would later create an early “incubator” that provided professional development for principals. The incubator was eventually housed under OUSD during the state takeover when BAYCES’ Executive Director, Steve Jubbs, began to work for state administrator in leading the district. Mirella Rangel, who sat on BAYCES board at the time, explained:

Hae-Sin left Ascend [OUSD small school-turned-charter school] to create a district incubator. And at that point, it must’ve been Randy [Ward] who was like, “This small schools thing is great.” And then he went small schools crazy and was like, “we’re going to cut up that high school and cut up that high school, and you get a small school, you get a small school. Oh, this school is not doing well? We’re going to make you into small school.”

Approximately 13 OUSD schools were targeted for turnaround, which meant reconstitution, charter conversion, or small school creation, or else risk closure (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. Turnaround Options, 2005

School Portfolio Management: Historical Significant Intervention Alternatives

Alternative	Description
Continued support and monitoring	• School continues to operate as it is currently configured and received extensive support and monitoring from Network Officer • School will continue to be an “Area of Focus” school
Internal Restructuring	• School engages in a comprehensive internal restructuring process to redesign the school from within
New School Incubation	• A new school is created through the OUSD new school incubation process
Charter Conversion and/or New Charter	• Tenured members of the existing staff vote to convert the school to a charter school OR • A new charter school opens on or nearby the existing campus
Closure	• School is closed and the facility is used for another purpose

This time purpose of small schools had shifted from “where people were raising their hand and saying they want to do it” to being told “you’re going to be small school.” In other words, as Rangel put it, “the self-determination went out the window.” Many neighborhood schools slated for closure choose the small school route, which the district incubator worked on. Rangel considered the district’s work over the last decade to be more along the lines of “incubator-light”:

Did they incubate any schools? I mean, if they’re talking more recently, with the Intensive School Supports process and the Call for Quality Schools, there was incubator-light kind of going on. [...] It was half-ass done with not enough resources. So it kind of failed. [...] And then that’s not to say that the adults or the people at the school have failed. It’s that to do an incubator, you need outside resources to help develop agendas and all of that. And a principal can’t be ‘principaling’ and create agendas for their team and do outreach for events and all that kind of stuff. You can’t do both.

Rangel’s analysis highlights the changing role of school leaders, who have moved from instructional leaders to being in charge of redesign and outreach, and in some cases, marketing their school to families and funders.

OUSD has since closed that office and a new local intermediary, Educate78, has taken over the incubation work with their design lab. Named after the 78 square miles that make up Oakland, Educate78 promotes their local focus, but they were an off-shoot of the Silicon Valley-backed NewSchools Venture Fund. At a school design panel hosted by UC Berkeley’s Haas School of Business, the founder of Educate78’s design lab, Carolyn Gramstorff, described the outcomes-focused “transformational schools” work that takes place in her organization:

Our overall goal is to double the number of transformational schools in the district in the next five to seven years. To do that, Educate78 is an equal opportunity love-and-hate-approach because we actually believe that it takes all those schools to create a system that is effective for students. We believe in cross-sector collaboration, and we believe in taking multiple approaches to creating high-quality transformational schools.

Her words echo unity rhetoric espoused by the portfolio regime about taking an agnostic approach to school governance (see Chapter 7 for discussion on discursive strategies). Since it started in 2015 aimed at “strategic giving and leadership,” they have provided funding for educator professional development workshops, coaching for principals and teachers, grants for high-performing schools to expand, and will soon focus on support school leaders of color. The work of Educate78 proves that venture capitalists and other funders do not need a charter school to foster marketization in the public schools — they can work directly with partnership-friendly central offices for that.

Unofficial Policies

The “Community of Schools” initiative changed the policy mechanisms and governance structures in ways outside of what they claimed to set out to achieve. While the foundation of the portfolio strategy centers on managing school choice options, Oakland Unified’s reconfiguration of central office affected other areas like such as a bloated central office administration, inefficient spending on consultants, and instability from policy churn. Situating this specific initiative within a broader history reveals how decades of state disinvestment in Oakland’s public schools have led the district to rely on private funding streams to build capacity.

Bloated Administrative Costs, Number of Consultants, and Intermediary Influence.

A key contradiction within the portfolio strategy is that government is, in theory, supposed to be lean, and yet in practice, Oakland has a bloated central office with twice as many upper level administrators as districts of the same size, where benefits for top administrators in OUSD cost 50 percent more per employee than other districts (Epstein, 2017). It became a glaring issue under Superintendent Antwan Wilson. A Broad-trained superintendent with previous experience working with Denver's portfolio model, Wilson recruited a number of Denver Public Schools staff to work with him in Oakland Unified. Within three years, he pushed a number of portfolio policies, including a failed attempt at common enrollment, but was still very influential in pushing through contracts with consultants and expanding charter schools. Most notoriously, the district overspent twice its budget on administrators and consultants under Wilson's leadership. In 2016, the district spent 22.4 million dollars on administrators and supervisors when the board has only authorized 10.4 million (Tucker, 2017). Similarly, in 2014, the year of his appointment, the board only approved \$7.1 million on consultants, while the district spent \$22.6 million. He accomplished changes with support from the 'edu-preneur' network of foundations and intermediaries, plus a tough demeanor. Kim Davis, parent organizer, explained:

There's a lot of blame that goes around that has nothing to do with our current school board. But the things that I hold the current board responsible for, and some members were more responsive than others, but all of them failed to raise the necessary alarm and do the necessary push back. They were, frankly, I think, intimidated by Superintendent Wilson. He was ... I would imagine not an easy man to disagree with. Certainly, when people publicly disagreed with him, it was not pleasant.

The intimidation by Wilson's team was echoed by the state trustee assigned to the district under the next superintendent, Chris Learned, who shared with a local newspaper:

I don't agree with a lot of what I saw him do. I think he was very insistent on getting his way. The role of the trustee is to be sure that the board and the superintendent are not making decisions that are putting the district in financial risk. (Tucker, 2017, para. 14).

But the previous state trustee did not raise the alarm either. Superintendent Wilson left OUSD within two years to Washington, D.C., where he was swiftly fired early on in his superintendency for gaming the enrollment system to secure a spot for his children at a prestigious school.

When asked about this discrepancy, Paul Hill, the architect behind the portfolio strategy, was adamant that Oakland's top-heavy central office was not a consequence of his design but rather an "historic problem":

Oakland's central office costs were overwhelming in the days of Dennis Chaconas. In fact, the one reason that his administration failed was that they just had no control of their costs. How does that happen? Part of it is that it's pretty easy for a superintendent to direct a little more money to a new office, so every new superintendent's innovations become the biggest costs of the previous superintendent. Especially in poor cities, there's a real desire, real pressure to find jobs for people, and so you have a lot of clerical staff. I think that has nothing to do with portfolio [strategy], but certainly, portfolio didn't fix it.

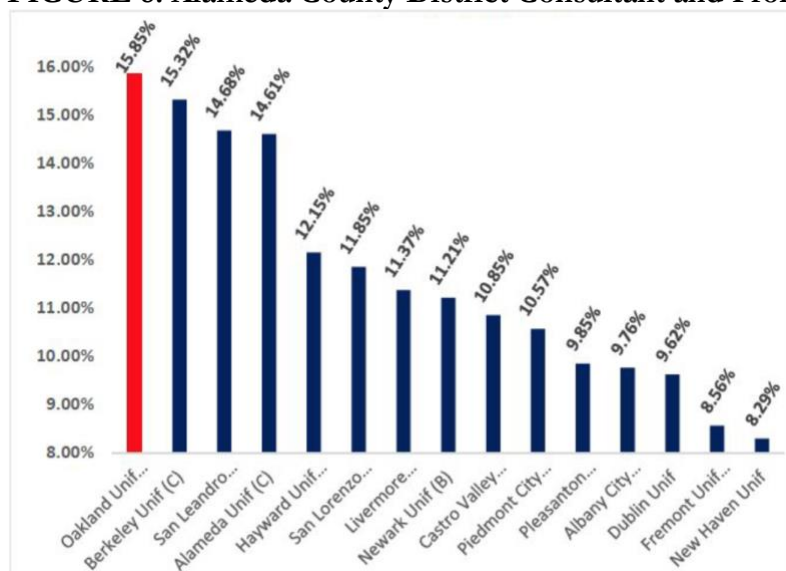
Portfolio management in Oakland meant that "schools get to exist on the money that's left over after the central office has made its claim." Hill pointed to the OUSD's "gigantic gap" between

central office and school site funding – an issue echoed by parents, students, and teachers protesting recent budget cuts during the 2018-2019 school year:

For Oakland historically, the proportion of all the money that was actually in the schools was low because the central office was so big. [...] I've always thought of that as an opportunity, but it's also an indication of how much structure, how many employees, how many promises, how much patronage and so on is in the way.

It also drove him “a little bonko” that philanthropy had a role in exacerbating the central office bloat during the state takeover: “Ward had this quite radical idea of strengthening the schools as schools, and at the same time, the foundations were helping him build up a big central office.” While these financial issues are not new, and certainly cannot be blamed on one superintendent (whether that be Dennis Chaconas or Antwan Wilson), issues of patronage, overspending, and top-heavy administrators have been exacerbated during OUSD’s transition to a portfolio district. A 2018 grand jury report found that OUSD spends more than six times the statewide average on supervisor and administrator salaries and more than three times the statewide average for consulting services and operating expenditures (Alameda Grand Jury, 2018). There was backlash, for example, when it became known that a facilities consultant was earning 30,000 per month in the middle of layoffs and million-dollar budget cuts to school sites (Oakland Post, 2015; OUSD, 2015). Figure 8 below shows that OUSD leads other districts in Alameda County.

FIGURE 8. Alameda County District Consultant and Professional Services



Doug Appel for OEA/CTA/NEA. Data source: State certified unaudited actuals

There is a racial bias to the issues of “patronage,” as I outlined in Chapter 5, where local politicians of color have been blamed for mismanagement while the economic restructuring and manufactured crises that starved city centers remains largely unquestioned. Similar accusations of “unmotivated” teachers and other unionized staff became a popular representation as well as other staff, essentially dismissing districts as a “jobs program.” Intermediary organizations started to gain traction with school districts as the education industry was rapidly developed in the 1990s, building on the already-established non-profits from prior decades. This was late in comparison to social

institutions in the private sector, like housing and healthcare, that have always integrated public-private partnerships, private contracting, and market logics. For example, federal infrastructure projects, social welfare non-profits, and even the leadership development of unions. The most infamous, and divisive, intermediary is Teach For America, whose founder and longtime CEO Wendy Kopp went on to redefine the field and build an influential network of alumni that would advance market-oriented ideas and strategies, even beyond the United States. Most relevant to the study of governance are the intermediaries focused on providing “shared” spaces for charter and district staff and students.

Charter networks have worked with national intermediaries as a way to navigate the various state regulations or standards for approving charter schools for charter schools across districts and counties:

Districts have different standards and expectations, ranging from rules governing how the public can access charter-school board meetings to rules on the financial ties between a charter’s board members and businesses that provide services to charters, like back-office support or food delivery. In some cases, one authorizer’s requirements may conflict with another’s — another challenge to a network trying to establish charter schools in multiple jurisdictions. (EdSource)

While these practices have been more common in charter management organizations, philanthropic and intermediary support has since expanded to more portfolio- and partnership-friendly districts. For example, The City Fund was founded in 2018 by two billionaires, Netflix’s Reed Hastings and Texas philanthropist John Arnold, and has quickly become one of the largest K-12 education grantmakers largely focused on advancing the portfolio models in districts across the country (Barnum, 2020).

TABLE 4. List of Major Grants Made By The City Fund

Grantee	Purpose	Amount	Date Awarded	Term
Building Excellent Schools	Support for the development of high-quality school options in Oakland, CA	\$300,000	4.22.19	2 years
Educate78	Continuation of support previously provided by The Hastings Fund for work to improve public education opportunities in Oakland, including the expansion of high-quality schools and support for the development of diverse teacher pipelines	\$4,250,000	4.5.19	2 years
Education for Change Public Schools	Support for general operations and increased family engagement efforts in Oakland, CA	\$675,000	7.12.19	2 years

School Board Partners	Operations support for leadership development of elected school board members	\$250,000	1.1.19	1 year
Silicon Schools Fund	Support for expansion of innovative public school models in Oakland, CA	\$666,666	4.16.19	2 years
Teach For America	Support for teacher support and development in Oakland, CA	\$1,500,000	3.8.19	2 years

Source: The City Fund, 2019.

While many of these grants go to organizations that in turn fund parent organizing groups, charter networks, teacher professional development, and political action committees, their money also follows many consultants and intermediary organizations that have contracts with Oakland Unified (Table 4). What may appear to be a “grassroots” or “community-based” organization mobilizing families around schools choice often has deep roots with venture capitalist projects.

Privatization operates at various levels within a district. As the number of highly-paid consultants has ballooned, middle-income unionized jobs are being contracted out. More than three-fourth of the Building and Ground workers (plumbers, electricians, carpenters and gardeners) voted against their 2015 contract for lack of protections and increasing employment precarity. As one employee said in an interview, “superintendent [Wilson]’s ultimate goal is to do away with the Building and Grounds Department and contract everything out to contractors, who do not have the best track record of accountability” (Oakland Post, 2015). Former board director and president David Kakishiba echoed these concerns nearly a decade earlier about the Expect Success initiative, where state-appointed officials made sweeping firings of district personnel:

You start seeing purges of whole groups of people. You look at the central administrative offices and it’s hard to find many people who were there even three years ago. We’ve lost a lot of institutional memory. We’ve driven out a lot of talent. (Allen-Taylor, 2006, para. 21)

The unions represented classified and non-classified workers are pushing back harder on private contracting. The Oakland Education Association made the case during their contract negotiations that in order to attract and retain the best educators, “OUSD must redirect resources from administration and outside service providers and use them to provide additional compensation to certificated staff, lower class sizes particularly for our most vulnerable students, and fund additional support services to students” (OEA, slide 127). In other words, pricey professional consultants are diverting much-needed tax dollars properly serving its students.

In the end, the decisions that impact people’s livelihoods and educational experiences comes down to a managerialist perspective: experts know best about how to handle other people’s problems. The disruptive consequences, whether intentional or not, demonstrates that rational expertise is, in fact, quite politicized. Community engagement liaison and proud West Oakland native Brian McGhee explained:

I think due to gentrification there’s been a shift in government [and] leadership. There are people who are here for... I don't know, they mean well, but there’s a piece that’s missing which is the authenticity, the history. That’s what’s so important. I haven't forgotten where I came from because letters after my name don’t mean much to me. It’s important because the

system requires you to do so. [...] I may have a wealth of information but just because I don't have this degree or this level of education, I have a lot of education based on grassroots involvement. So, that outweighs all this other stuff around education.

There are more authentic ways, as Brian expressed, to govern schools, and it involves respect for history and other forms of institutional memory and community knowledge.

Policy Churn: Enrollment Loss, Budget Cuts & School Closures. A major criticism of the portfolio strategy is the constant churn of school openings and closures, causing disruption and instability for students and communities. What gets lost in technocratic terms like *facility underutilization*, *school optimization*, and *location allocation analysis* is the concept of schools as hubs for communities. OUSD Director of Parent Engagement Cintya Molina had many stories of schools long closed. As a parent of a child with special needs, she knew intimately the painful experiences associated with being shuffled from school to school in search of a community where her son and other underserved students could have a quality education. One such school was Marshall Elementary, a school located “in the hundreds” near high poverty, mostly Black neighborhoods at the edge of East Oakland:

I feel that Marshall was a huge missed opportunity. I was exhausted as a parent, that was right after Tildon Elementary [was closed] and my own kid was going through hell at school. [Marshall] was almost 90% African American, super majority, and there was 30 some percent of students with IEP's [individualized education plans]. The thing is, this is a school that had the longest track record of stability for SpEd [special ed] programming. It was super SpEd and general ed integrated. It was very African American. It was a golden, beautiful school with an amazing culture. And it gets closed.

From her dual perspective as a central office administrator in the district and Latina mother, Molina understood intimately the critical importance of an affirming school culture and quality education for students with special needs. This is a politicized issue in the school choice context, where charter schools accept a lower proportion of special education students while district schools serve special education students along with other high-need populations like foster youth, refugees, and unaccompanied minors. In Oakland, charter schools only accept 19 percent of the total number of special education students in the district, but receive 28 percent of the city's share of special education funding (Lafer, 2018). Along with Tilden Elementary, Molina's school, Marshall Elementary was one of five schools closed in 2011 under superintendent Tony Smith. It eventually went on to become 100 Black Men Charter, which was quickly closed, and is now the East Bay Innovation Academy:

It was small by design, because when you have a pre-K to five FDC continuum, you're going to have smaller numbers in a small site. So, people kept saying that it was under enrolled. But supposedly, no school that was performing was going to be closed. So by the most standard measures, above 800 API is a high performing school — not that I ascribe to that measure as a telling of the story, but even by those measures it was successful. And then, we have a [charter] school that serves Black kids when it was already a school that serves Black kids... that then closes within a certain timeframe. And I'm like, “Oh my god, why would they just wrap this beautiful project we already had?” So, I know this story of Marshall and how the students with IEP's and African Americans are always together in the story. Of course, there's overlap. They're in the same schools that are underestimated and underinvested. Against all odds, some beautiful things happen, and then they get closed.

Molina's voice revealed her exasperation with the contradictions of school closures. First, marketing a charter school to the Black community when the previous district school had already been serving Black students, and quite successfully. And second, inconsistent metrics for opening and closing schools. She continued to tell these untold and forgotten narratives of schools because these were often erased in the school reform narrative that paints all public schools as failing. She found herself explaining to people, ignorant of these local histories, "No, actually that did exist. Let me tell you which one it was. You want me to tell you the story of Howard? Okay, I'm going to tell you a story about what happened in Sante Fe." When her own child's school was closed down, she and other parent organizers toured fourteen schools to understand closures and consolidations and the metrics. These conversations made her an "archivist of school stories."

The portfolio model in Oakland has ultimately come down to justifying and rationalizing austerity measures. OUSD has been told to close its many schools, first externally through FCMA^T and now internally through superintendents' strategic plans. However, school closures have gotten the attention of the public, thanks to the organizing by the communities targeted for closure, that even the architect of the portfolio management model has backtracked on his framing of the issue. Paul Hill clarified that "turnarounds" are not the same as "closures" while recognizing that there have been cases where district administrators were unresponsive to the community:

One [issue] is, you've got a school and there are enough kids here, but the school isn't working very well, and you'd like to have a better way to run it. In the old days, you might have brought in Success For All to try to upgrade the school, and then might try to bring in, either by chartering or by contract, GreenDot or something. You think that's a way to upgrade the school. And it is a sort of closure and restart, but it isn't like the neighborhood is going to lose its school. And that has its issues, and it's been done badly in some cases. There's a way, I'm sure, that parents could be made privy to the issues and be listened to and be shown that the choice of provider in that school is actually responsive to what they said. At least that's what they're trying to do in some places.

In this vision of parent engagement, Paul detailed how they should be better informed about the turnaround process, but ultimately, a "restart" offers an "upgrade" for the community. He explained how churn was not inevitable, but likely in the pursuit of an "optimum" set of school options:

Bottom line, I do think that the theory we have does involve the possibility of some churn. It doesn't have to be churned – if you think you've actually got the optimum set of schools in your district right now, and you can't find a better one, then you shouldn't change it. But on the other hand, if you've got schools that are still disappointing and you need to find better options for the kids, that does lead to turnover even if it's not literal school closing. But then when you get compounded by population declines, whether they're just secular or whether caused by charters, then I think that it's being done much more smartly now. Where the case is being made about why the school needs to be closed, about what do you want in a school, here are the options you have, here is why we think that they will give you what you want. That is happening more, and frankly, it seems obvious that that's the humane and respectful way to do it.

The early work out of the Center for Reinventing Public Education had not done enough to circumvent the massive closures. Ultimately, efficiency is not enough without considering quality and that families rightfully want something in their neighborhood, but more than that, a good school. Paul Hill defends that they could not have foreseen these problems, "Were we good at writing about

that at the time? No, I don't think so. We haven't changed our minds... I think we never would've imagined that people would go in and be Donald Trump to parents, but they did." However, his analysis conflates school turnaround with a neighborhood school — skipping over how firing staff and leadership, changing its name, and other drastic measures still changes the character of the school.

For West Oakland native Brian McGhee, building community at a school is not something easily factored in when consultants calculate the costs and benefits of a consolidating school facility, deciding whether to let go of a staff member, or bringing in a new principal. A proud alum of McClymonds High School who now works for OUSD's African American Male Achievement program, McGhee expressed frustration with the loss of respect for how his community has shaped its schools in positive ways:

Would you do this for free? That's how the community was for us. It wasn't about how much I'm getting paid to support this organization or to support this event. It was like we're gonna do it because it's needed. Everyone is searching for the dollar, and everyone wants to be in charge of something. See back then everybody was okay to be a follower, to be a participant, because we listened to our elders. There were more elders sharing this information; we believed them [and] supported them. But now we don't have that anymore, so what do you call those folks? Folks who are implanted into the community just have no history. People are just here trying to make decisions about what they feel families need instead of asking about their elders, the Tapscotts, the Pattersons, the Perkins, those groups who've been here doing the work for years.

This intergenerational knowledge is lost in the churn of school closures and openings, where careers are made off of turning around failing schools — a White, middle class savior narrative practiced by people of all races.

Paul Hill defended the consequences of the portfolio strategy as factors that they, as researchers and consultants, could not have foreseen. However, I argue that closures are more than “unintended consequences” or poor implementation. The lack of consideration for democratic engagement and responsive, not to mention community-led, leadership was a decision, implicit or explicit, about what makes public-private governance possible. Underpinning theories of governance is this inherent belief that school leaders should be agnostic in their decisions, as opposed to ‘political,’ and rely on technical experts. However, power is a constant presence and struggle in education, and therefore, requires leaders to confront the politics of inequality without the guise of neutrality. Community voice and mobilization has a place in the portfolio theory of action, yet in limited forms to maintain legitimacy or to squash resistance via cooptation.

But what is a portfolio district, really?

Over the course of 15 years, district and non-district leaders have attempted to make the transition from state takeover to a “system of schools that work,” as described by an evaluation from the California State University-Northridge (2004). Others, like venture philanthropist Brian Rogers, were less convinced that the district was actually embodying the portfolio philosophy:

I don't think that Oakland is a portfolio district. A portfolio district is when your school board takes on the attitude of ‘Every school in Oakland is our school.’ We're going to provide schools regardless of governance, and that it can bring in different students and serve those students in unique and individual ways. I really do think the school district still has an attitude of ‘Charter schools are not our schools. We have to make sure no more of

our students go to charter schools because it's having a financial impact on our district.' There's not this sense of, 'Okay, we got 127 schools here to serve 60,000 kids.' That's what a portfolio school district is. It's not a school system, it's a system of schools where like, 'Hey, you got 90% of your high school kids proficient on your ELA and Math scores for the SBAC. How did you do that? How do we get some of our teachers in your classrooms to understand what it takes to do that? You want to expand? Oh, we've got a facility over here that's empty. Come on over here' [...] Oakland's not there yet.

Rogers highlights the confusion that resurfaced across the interviews: it is unclear whether Oakland has a portfolio strategy, and even more debatable if it is accomplishing what its architects in the 1990s set out to achieve – efficiency, innovation, and in more recent discourse, equity. Despite the consultants, resources, and infrastructure models provided by a neoliberal network of think tanks (CRPE) and philanthropies (Broad) during the state receivership, issues around the state receivership developed.

While people have pushed back on the business-type portfolio label, Rangel argued that the district is already there, “We have been [portfolio] because we've had small schools, charter schools, and districts schools. We are [portfolio] by de facto. Now, are we managing it? No.” Lakisha Young resented that so much of the conversation centered on charter regulation rather than what she viewed as the bigger challenge for the district:

The other thing is, don't try to make it seem like the district's only problem is being a good authorizer. They also have a problem of producing quality educational models to students, especially students of color. You don't want to hear that it's more complex than the way you're living life. That there's some of us that are straddling. I got a daughter in a district school and I've got two sons in charter school, and that's how it works for a lot of people. And if you want to talk about this whole ecosystem, all those people need to be at the table. Not just your little cronies who are anti-charter. Or these people who don't have no skin in the game, don't have kids, maybe never had kids — don't even freakin' live in Oakland. It's just ridiculous.

To her and the parents she organizes, they were already in portfolio-like circumstances which “anti-charter people” did not experience.

Berkeley: Public Governance

Compared to Oakland, education reform in BUSD has focused on building on more equity-oriented efforts within the public sphere with policies and initiatives like Vision 2020, desegregation, and Universal Ninth Grade. However, as this section details, threats of austerity under neoliberalism continue to be threaten equity plans as seen in the increasing private funding and budget cuts.

Defending Desegregation

In 1968, Berkeley Unified School District was the first in the nation to voluntarily implement a two-way busing program where Black children in the flatlands and White children in the hills were transported/transferred to opposite neighborhoods to attend elementary school. This was a time of strife, struggle, and unity that defined the perspectives and life trajectories of many young children involved. One newspaper reported its significance on the plan's 50th anniversary, “Each bus was labeled with a color and an animal: I rode the red rooster. I was on the green duck. Like

their old Co-op grocery store numbers, it's something some Berkeley natives of a certain age have never forgotten" (Orenstein, 2018).

As in many cities across the country following desegregation efforts, white families in Berkeley moved to white and wealthy enclaves like Orinda or pulled their kids into private middle schools. The district's enrollment plummeted in the 15 years following integration efforts, from 16,000 to 9,000 (citation). After decades of falling enrollment, BUSD went back to the drawing board in 1995. Two-way bussing was replaced with three attendance zones cut horizontally across the city, divided to achieve racial balance within each zone. Black students comprised 39% of the district at that time, while Asian and Latinx populations had grown in the 1980s but remained at x% (citation). This was the beginning of "controlled choice," a lottery system that assigned students to elementary schools within their attendance zone based on their race but also gave parents some options their region. However, the following year in 1996, Prop 209 made race-based assignments illegal. In 2004, the district was forced to reevaluate their integration plan using different metrics. Legal scholars and researchers at UC Berkeley and across the state found that socioeconomic status, parent education levels, and languages spoken at home turned out to be proxies for race with similar integration results. The Berkeley assignment plan was upheld by the CA Supreme Court (citation).

The Supreme Court ruled, in the 2007 *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* case, that districts "could not assign students to schools based on individual racial identities." Berkeley Unified was challenged by conservative groups in the courts and won, as Orenstein reported (2018):

Though Proposition 209 supporters tried to challenge the Berkeley system, a California appeals court ruled in 2009 that BUSD had not violated the law with its 2004 plan, as school assignment was based on neighborhood diversity, not student race. The Supreme Court refused to take up a challenge to that decision, handing Berkeley, and anyone else who wanted to copy the plan, a victory. Back in 1968, Sullivan's slogan was "schools worthy of imitation." But there have been surprisingly few copycats of any of Berkeley's plans, scholars say.

Rebecca Cheung noted that Berkeley "had a centralized admissions system way before Oakland did. This was this big controversial thing that [OUSD Superintendent 2014-2018] Antwan [Wilson] did, but actually, Berkeley's been doing it for a long time because that's the only way to do the integration." Civil rights and desegregation scholar Gary Orfield lauded BUSD's deep commitment to integration despite these challenges in a 2009 report:

The Berkeley plan, built around creating and operating schools where parents of all races from all parts of the city will want to send their children, is characteristic of the past three decades of desegregation plans in urban areas in its reliance on school and educational innovation (Mandatory transfer or involuntary busing plans were largely products of the 1970s.) These newer plans clearly disprove the claim that we must chose between educational quality and integration. Families of color have never pursued desegregation to sit next to white students. It has been about obtaining equal opportunity and access to the best schools and programs and networks to college, the vast majority of which are in white and Asian communities. (pp. iii-iv)

Other people, like Berkeley parent and now director of the Office of Family Engagement and Equity Ann Callegari, felt differently. Her experiences with the schools, staff, and later organizing as an Afro-Belizean mother demonstrated that the bold desegregation efforts did not create an

integrated environment for its students. She distinguished integration as having another layer of “thoughtful, intentional action to connect people and to get rid of those assumptions, or at least educate people about their own assumptions and equity.” She argued:

Berkeley has never integrated. They desegregated. Because integration did not take place back then and it has not taken place yet. [...] I’ve read backboard documents on Berkeley Unified School District and the changes that have taken place, and the fact that we’re very proud of the fact that we desegregated before being forced to -- which I think is great. The problem is that it was based on the assumption that if you put a white kid next to a black kid, that somehow things are going to be better for everyone. Without the actions, making sure that everyone had equitable access.

The intentionality is not there, instead leaving complacency about deep inequities, including overshadowed metrics, like parents of color belonging to their school community. Callegari explained:

With the desegregation, schools were able to “have more resources.” Let’s say PTA, fundraising, et cetera. However, what’s happened is that the actual investment based on the needs of the students in the different spaces, that has to change in order for it to be truly integrated. There has to be outreach. There has to be inclusion. People like myself and other parents need to know that that’s their school, too. That’s their district. The efforts to make a system that was not intended for people, for non-white people, available to non-white people, requires action. It requires thought. It requires a plan. That’s integration. [...] That’s why we’re here at 2009, having these conversations.

While integration is a source of pride for Berkeley Unified, Callegari’s account reveals that the district community is still far from valuing families of color in the ways that they deserve.

Public Market?: Controlled School Choice

While Berkeley has only had one charter school and instead poured efforts into a desegregated school system, a district-controlled education market still exists. Rebecca Cheung, former teacher and district administrator, explained how market ideals still existed while she was a principal in Berkeley Unified, first at Emerson in 2001:

Berkeley Unified created its own market-driven system within the district. And I think that ecology, because it was within, effected the charter piece. So basically, Berkeley went into busing and Oakland never went into busing, and the school board members in Berkeley are at-large. They are not by regions because they really eliminated the idea of a neighborhood school by and large through their desegregation policies. In fact, that was a real shock for me coming from Oakland where I’d been at Allendale and other places ... I mean, Allendale was overcrowded when I was there. We were year-round, multi-track school. You did not need to advertise. You had people you were turning away. And so when I came to Berkeley and I’m like, “We have to do what?” That was way earlier than Oakland was doing those things. And so we were having to create presentations, we were having to distinguish ourselves. We had all these tours and parents were involved in tours and kindergarten and this and that, and all sorts of stuff.

In Berkeley's enrollment model, which centers desegregation, still had wiggle room for choice within a select attendance zone. And the pressure to attract "first-choice" families in the lottery placements, typically more affluent and white, reified social stratification between schools: "And so it was the same market mentality, but within the district and not only that, but there was extreme pressure on the schools to distinguish themselves from each other, which is also a market driven issues." Cheung argued that Berkeley had choice system earlier than Oakland, albeit BUSD's "controlled choice" was within district control.

Among the principals, internally, there was a lot of pressure to get first choice parents, because there was a sense that first choice parents were commodities, which is the same thing that's happening in Oakland, but again, this was internal. I remember as a principal of Emerson, for example, being one of the four schools, and we were a relatively small school, that people wanted more first choice families, because then they didn't take late families, as an example.

"Late families" was code for lower-income, often Black families. Here, this process was intensified through magnet programs, which were big in Berkeley.

Before I got to Emerson in 2001, there had been a series of opportunities for the Office of the Civil Rights to apply for magnet funding. Magnet schools were really big at that time in the early '90s, and this was really fascinating to me. The policy of the magnet's money was to attract white families to predominately poor schools. So what happened was Berkeley Unified used the magnet grant process to create unique identities for many of the schools that were in the flats. They even had a magnet office, they had a magnet director, they had a whole machine around this.

Schools like Malcolm X Elementary became Malcolm X Arts and Academics School, and Rosa Parks Elementary had environmental science through the magnet process. The process of creating unique identities put schools like Emerson under pressure to create unique identities to attract first round lottery families.

So there were so many internal talks with the teachers about, "What can we say? What can we say about ourselves that makes us better or different so people will choose us?" All those same behaviors were there, basically. And what did we use as our selling point? That we were a smaller school, because we were, and then we were more of a community and we had a very strong afterschool program. And all the schools had to do information nights. There were tours. It was not a neighborhood environment at all.

Cheung pointed out, and criticized, the pressure for principals to recruit more affluent White families at the expense of poor and low-income families of color. She recalled Berkeley High counselors would come to her middle school to recruit students with thinly-veiled class-based discourse, such reminding parents to enroll their students for independent study when going on business trips – quite far from the reality of most families at Longfellow Middle School in the 2000s. Cheung recounted, "You basically just told all of my families that they don't belong at your school, and they haven't even gotten there yet."

2020 Vision and Universal 9th Grade

The efforts around racial justice in Berkeley's schools and neighborhoods have been mobilized by multiracial coalitions at different points in the local history of school reform, but the 2020 Vision made many feel that change was possible. The 2020 Vision began in 2009 as a citywide initiative that "strives to eliminate racial disparities in academic achievement in Berkeley's public schools" including kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, college and career readiness, improved School attendance and health, and community and family engagement (Berkeley's 2020 Vision: Equity in Education, 2019). This cross-sector initiative bridged research on social indicators with test score data as well as challenged the narrative about progressive Berkeley by taking accountability. According to BUSD board director Julie Sinai, "The city and the school district both passed the 2020 Vision solution, and we decided that in order to really grapple with the inequities in the community, we have to do it together. We can't finger point, we can't blame. We have to do it together and we have to be held accountable by the community." Together, these efforts signaled a change for many involved despite resistance to evidence of structural racism.

The BUSD arm of the 2020 Vision mostly centered on engagement, which many stakeholders located as the problem, along with representation on the board. This ambitious plan was unsuccessful, in the eyes of many interviewed, for a few reasons, including that it was not integrated into BUSD's strategic plan and that it suffered from what former superintendent Huyett called "analysis paralysis." It was not necessarily meaningful to many people on the ground, particularly teachers and principals. This was due to the "communication problems" according to school board director Julie Sinai, "It didn't penetrate for the district. People were like, 'What is it?' And I still think if you talk to 10 people, you get 10 different answers." The focus on representation created change on the board, where all five directors are endorsed by the 2020 Vision. As BFT president Cathy Campbell, a white woman, put it, "For some people it was enough to just elect people of color to the school board, to other people it was only worth doing that if they brought with them a certain agenda." Pastor Mike McBride, who is African American, expressed his disappointment in some of the other Black people in leadership positions in the city and the district. While he considered some of the work to have been "effective and powerful," like city and district parent engagement meetings, most of the 2020 Vision efforts were too reformist:

It was kind of 'how do we build the capacity of families to endure or be successful in the system as it is?' None of it was like 'we're going to transform this system. We're going to radically redistribute resources or shift the way this is ran.' It was all, 'we're going to get families to do better in this broken system.' And I found it to be not very compelling.

Since the 2020 Vision, there have not been major district-wide efforts to reform schools, particularly around school governance. School improvement in Berkeley Unified has focused around peer assistance for teachers or debates around standardized testing and curriculum. The universal 9th grade (U9) is the most recent governance change to redesign the ninth grade from small schools and academies into one grade. Tamara Friedman recalls her time as an administrator at BHS in 2016 when she implemented the de-tracked ninth grade curriculum:

I had this fantasy that we could get a 9th grade group in and shift the culture by putting forth a different set of core values, by holding all kids accountable to high academic rigorous standards. But, also helping them reach those standards, really supporting them, that we could sometime begin to shift the culture of this school.

Tamara admitted, “I don't know if that's going to happen.”

Democratic Engagement

In Oakland, the 2003 state takeover eliminated school board committees — a significant hurdle for public transparency and communication. When district and non-district leaders re-gained most decision-making authority, they justified the institutionalization of market-based strategies as drastic, yet necessary changes to how schools are governed, consequently redefining democratic participation. Oakland Unified was redesigned during and after state receivership using elements of a portfolio strategy, democratic engagement shifted in key ways that reveals the different, and sometimes contradictory, approaches that government and private sector leaders took in attempting to gain buy-in from Black, Asian, and Latinx communities. In response to the community backlash that ensued, district leaders and philanthropically-funded intermediary organizations attempted to involve local stakeholders and community organizations in these decisions; however, the limited community *engagement* practices were replaced with community *informing* sessions that felt largely symbolic to many participants.

In Berkeley, various committees to serve the vocal constituents, but remain largely inaccessible to working class, and some middle class, parents of color. The development of the Office of Family Engagement and Equity (OFEE) is one of only a few significant changes in central office, spurred by parent demands for inclusive engagement. As non-profits have left following the displacement of Berkeley's working-class populations, families of color have engaged the district directly with the help of allies in OFEE. As advocacy and intermediary organizations have crept into the fabric of Oakland Unified, sometimes playing key roles in redefining school services and functions, Berkeley Unified represents a unique case of direct democratic engagement between families and central office where affinity groups have been key to overcoming White normative expectations of parent engagement.

Oakland

The Blueprint: Redefining the Terms of Community Engagement

What started as a typical facilities master plan turned into a sprawling community engagement initiative. The Blueprint for Quality Schools process, which started in 2017 with the leadership and influence of GO Public Schools, encapsulates community engagement under the portfolio strategy. In learning from the mistakes of past market-based reforms, Paul Hill and other portfolio architects were aware of the consequences of not having community members buy into district plans. The district staff and consultants formed a Blueprint advisory committee comprised of “54 community members that represent the diversity of Oakland's regions and the students OUSD serves.” The plan was for the group to “meet five times throughout the process to advise and create content for District leadership and consultant teams and prepare to present options to the Board of Education in January 2018” (*Blueprint for Quality Schools*, 2017). Once again, fear surrounding the financial crisis in Oakland education reform led to calls for “unity” between charter and district sectors as a means of creating a more “equitable” education market for the most underserved communities. And that meant making tough decisions about school closures — collectively.

Kim Davis, parent and public school advocate, sat on the Blueprint advisory committee, to which she commented “as many with projects it starts off with a good idea.” When Antwan Wilson left, the idea pivoted from its focus on a new construction bond to rethinking buildings and use of space for school improvement. For example, creating a laboratory space for a STEM-focused school. Davis explained, “if you're gonna be putting money into construction, you should be putting

money into construction in ways that follow that vision.” She was surprised by the effort that the community engagement staff took in promoting the meetings and forming a diverse group of 54 participants with different ideologies and affiliations, including critics of past district initiatives like her. While she credited it for being an improvement from past efforts, ultimately, “we don’t have any money to invest in STEM programs, we don’t have money to invest in community engagement...we don’t have money for any of this. As it turns out, we’re not even gonna go out for the bond.” Another dynamic that felt uncomfortable for many committee members was that the large representative body would make decisions about schools that they did not belong to. Davis and others felt that the district should be asking the school community directly about its strengths and weaknesses, and that it was unethical to put them in charge of closing their fellow neighbors’ schools. Furthermore, despite the plethora of information, there were questions that were never answered, and perhaps could not be answered, by OUSD staff and consultants:

We never had a list of who had special education programs at their site. Who had language programs? Who had a great music teacher? All of those kinds of strengths and weaknesses that we could’ve at least acted almost in place of the community to at least raise those issues. We didn’t have that information. And then the other information that we didn’t have was how many charter schools are around the school and if we close a school, what’s gonna happen? What’s gonna happen to those students? How has that school been impacted by that?

To understand the value of a school, there needed to be more than test score information. There also lacked a needs and impact assessment to understand how closures and consolidations reverberate throughout the city. Davis detailed the “frustrating” experience, as the district went full speed ahead with its plans:

By the time that the process was finished in January, we felt like we had not accomplished anything. We were given a lot of information, we were not given the opportunity for input. Unfortunately, I did not feel like it was a great process. I felt like it was a valuable process. I don’t feel like we should be finished. I feel like there was more work to be done, and that would’ve been helpful. But, the district has made the decision that they’re moving forward at their pace because, again, community engagement... It slows things down. And they’re gonna come up with a decision in May, for schools to be impacted over the course of the next year without any of that information. It’s frustrating.

What was left was a performative form of democracy, that changed the process but went full speed ahead with the same goal.

This is a particular form of democratic conception, one that values appointing representatives for diversity purposes who make decisions within the district’s parameters. According to Oakland native and public education activist Mike Hutchinson, “community informing” is not an authentic form of community engagement:

We don’t know how to do community engagement. What’s happened with the school board over, and over, and over is the school board staff and school board members will come up with a plan, and they try to figure out a way to sell it to the community through an engagement process. And so, what they will do is they’ll call the community engagement meeting, and they’ll sit there, and the best case is they’ll tell people you can do this or you can do this. Usually, they will come and inform the community about the decisions that has

been made. That's how all of this has worked from construction projects to huge policy decisions to school closures.

Former board president David Kakishiba echoed similar concerns with the implementation with Expect Success back in 2006:

It's based on the notion that real change cannot occur with democratic participation. That's counter-intuitive to the type of system we are trying to create. It's saying that the paid personnel know the answers and they have to be given time to embed these things in the system before we go back to normal operation. (Allen-Taylor, 2006)

On the other hand, many interview participants, particularly charter and district leaders, questioned whether democratic process impedes any strides towards equity in Oakland's public schools. Dirk Tillotson, CEO of Great School Voices, an education blog, and Great School Choices, a school choice advocacy organization based in Oakland and New York City, explained:

There's also something overly contentious about [Oakland] politics, which I'm coming to this idea where I wonder if democratic politics works in Oakland; elected representation making decisions on behalf of the district. Because everybody just kicks the can down the road and doesn't make the hard decisions because it's so politically ... The decisions they'd have to make to pull themselves out of where they are? It would be incredibly, politically unpopular. Because the last ten years everyone's kicked the can down the road and now someone is stuck with a big can of shit."

Tillotson's quote interprets democracy mainly via electoral politics (e.g., school board elections), but other participants posited that a universal approach, one where everyone in the district is involved, has led to further marginalized the voices of underserved parents and students. Many charter advocates question the value of democracy, or doubt that it can "work" in Oakland. As much as charter schools were founded on a critique of educational inequity, there is still investment in elite expertise, revealing concerns that equity, efficiency, and excellence will not be achieved by democratic means. Hutchinson, who has not shied away from being disruptive in board meetings, has expressed a different orientation towards his hometown politics, "A lot of what I do is my belief in Oakland and in my community. I firmly believe that if the school district would authentically engage the community, we could come to much better solutions."

Over the last 15 years, advocacy organizations have been charged with making school and district information accessible. OUSD "Community Engagement" Office has morphed into "Family Engagement," a subtle name change that re-shifted the office's focus to helping families navigate school choice options, which some parents have accused of unofficially funneling students into charter schools. While the implementation of the portfolio strategy redefined democratic engagement in ways that have limited who participated and the type of participation, in other ways, the portfolio strategy has created more democratic opportunities for some underserved constituents through partnerships with education reform advocacy organizations, like Great Oakland Public Schools (GO). Information on the GO website tends to include more accessible language compared to district jargon with eye-catching infographics. The District has hired more community organizers in the past 20 years, in part by hiring people connected to GO. The transparency of information on select district finances and enrollment is a significant difference with the creation of the "Fiscal Transparency" website that lists the contracts the district has with outside partners. However, expanded community access or attention to equity in the district's mission can be attributed to larger

social movements that have shifted the national policy discourse politically to the left, forcing portfolio advocates to adapt to new political paradigm.

The tensions around “authentic” community engagement within the Blueprint for Quality Schools Report of 2017-2018 are echoed over two decades of attempts to improve district-community relations. It begs the question, if community members are more engaged in closing their own schools and making their own budget cuts, is it a more “equitable” or “democratic” process? No, according to one community member, an older White man, overheard at a Blueprint community meeting on the state of district finances, who said angrily, “They’re giving us the knife to cut our own neck” (August 2017).

The Quest for a “Homegrown” Superintendent

The community forum on the search for a new superintendent took place on January 14, 2017 on a calm and sunny Saturday morning in the East Oakland neighborhood where Frick Impact Academy is located. Small houses with fenced-in, manicured lawns, barred windows, and security doors lined the residential area that neighbored a cemetery.

A middle school with 1960s-style architecture, Frick was one of the five schools targeted on the District’s turnaround list and has since rebranded with intensive supports. The empty building was lined with posters about the school’s uniform policy, resources for parents, class requirements, and art projects about migration narratives to Oakland. One exhibit case held an art project that included drawings of the Bay Bridge and the city skyline with a border that read “Oakland” along with other countries and cities like Honduras, Yemen, and San Francisco.

The meeting was hosted by school board members Rosie Torres and Shanthi Gonzales with 40-50 people in attendance; big enough to be an audience, but small enough to connect with people. After starting a few minutes late, Director Gonzales mentioned that there is childcare down the hall, but it is a bit crowded because they hadn’t expected so many people. Then she joked, “This is not a district meeting with jargon-y language. This is a real grassroots meeting.” There was a clear difference between this grassroots community engagement meeting and the meetings hosted by GO. The catering and color-coordinated decorations were replaced by a humble spread of food and drink options that included fruit and bagels with cream cheese and peanut butter. Sunlight streamed into the room, which appears to have been a library converted into a counseling/career/parent resource center. The audience was very diverse by race, class, gender, and age, some of whom were “regulars” at board meetings and others were new faces. In the front sat a big group of Latina mothers wearing purple Aspire Charter School listening to the Spanish interpretation provided.

Director Rosie recognized the wealth of knowledge in the room, such as former board president Dan Siegel, among others, and opened it up to a large group discussion to get people’s general thoughts on what they want from a superintendent. Fiscal responsibility was a theme throughout the evening. Dan Siegel explained that “the board needs to have a clear vision and goals before finding a superintendent,” that would ideally be published somewhere. He added, “This was the issue with Antwan Wilson.” Another person mentioned that this position should be more than “just a job” for whatever candidate the board chooses. One white woman in her mid-30s said that she would want their thoughts on Betsy DeVos – the new litmus test for privatization.

The panelists, all of whom were Black, introduced themselves and the issues they’ve faced in their schools as parent, student, and teacher stakeholders. Then, they turned to questions turned to what each panelist wants from a superintendent.:

“Oakland is viewed as a stepping stone... the superintendent does not have to be from Oakland, but committed to the city.”

“Follow the NAACP’s steps and call for a moratorium on charter schools.”

“More support for teachers and to reduce the “bloated school police budget.”

“Stop making promises you can’t keep.”

“Transparency.”

“It feels like there is division in the community —there is strength in unity.”

“The search committee should include teachers and principals.”

The issue of charter schools came up quickly, an unavoidable issue in Oakland. A Black mother in her 30s, gave her history of attending OUSD district schools, including the very school they were all meeting in. She speaks passionate and quickly with emotion that is holding back frustration. Her son with special needs is now at Aspire College Prep, a charter school, which she chose because it has more time and resources than her neighborhood school. She has previously spoke at board meetings advocating for extending Measure G funds to charter schools, and said firmly that she is “not pro-charter or pro-public, but pro-choice.” She noted that she is the only Black parent from Aspire present at the meeting, but that there is unity among them. “There is a lot that charters can learn from OUSD... bridge the gap,” which is essentially the tagline of the Oakland Public School Pledge.

The panel felt differently. One teacher expressed concern for the proliferation of charter schools, “I want to see the data — what is their enrollment?” The moderator mentioned that charter schools are not unionized and that parents are not as involved, to which a mother wearing an Aspire shirt shook her head in disagreement. Another panelist said more bluntly, “There is no transparency from charters.” From the back row a middle-aged Black men yelled out, “There is no transparency from public schools!”

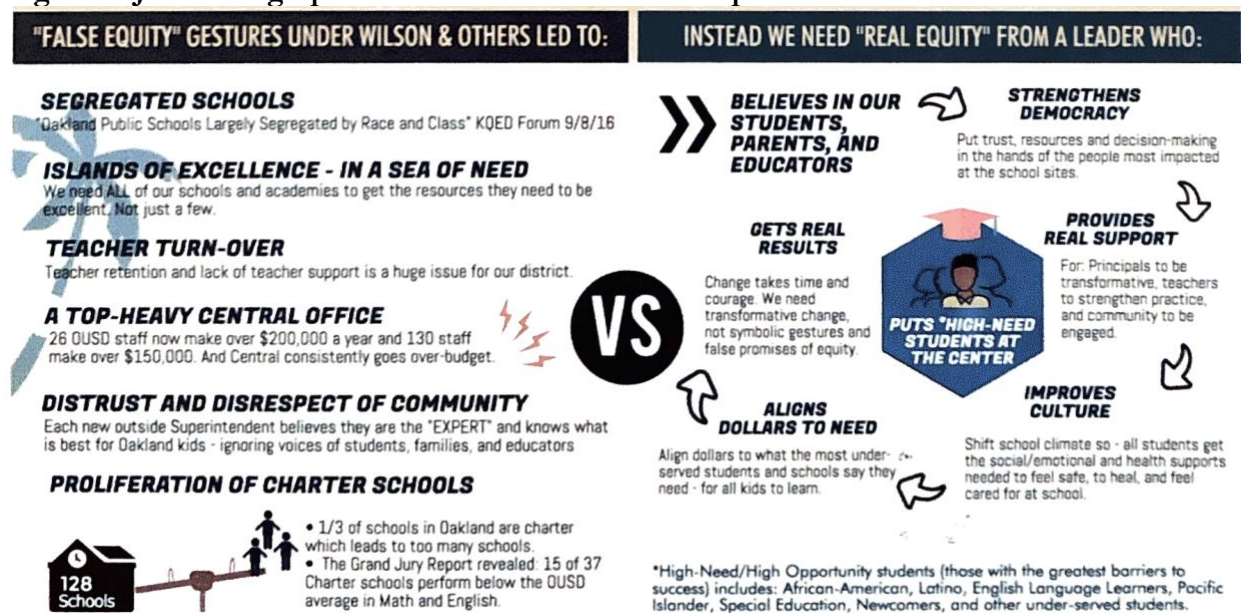
The conversation continued in small groups, where everyone had a chance to share what they wanted from a new superintendent, and then vote on what to share out to the large group. In one circle sat two custodial staff and union reps (older Black women), a white woman that seems critical of privatization and no significant tie to the district, an older white man who often speaks on the issues of charter resegregation), a young Latino man who works as PLAN organizer, former district staff, and a principal of a continuation school in Richmond and someone who ran for their school board. People rattled off a bunch of traits that were the opposite of the previous superintendent, Antwan Wilson. The list included: a California credential, no Broad Foundation connections, new ideas (but with some continuity), the board is in charge of the superintendent (not the reverse), not interested in their own legacy, support for the Office of Equity programs, and — what was certainly a jab at Superintendent Wilson — “no superintendent that brings in outside people.” The Black charter school mom shared that OUSD cannot “operate as a business model,” which shows the ideological complexity of charter school parents.

Director Torres shared her experience at national conferences for Latino elected officials, where people in other districts, some in California, still have long-term superintendents. She said, “I have faith that there can be superstar superintendents who are committed to 8-10-15 years,” someone with “experience in this city” and “experience bringing together different groups” by race and class, particularly critical under gentrification. She also brought up the issue of gender equity and asked the audience to consider a woman for the position. Director Gonzales noted the importance of a leader who is willing to take the time to listen to what is happening in Oakland, rather than import ideas from another place, and who has a “commitment to democratic schools.”

The discussion around loyalties to leaders is embedded within the context of “local” versus “outsiders,” a long-standing tension that has intensified in Oakland under the last 15 years of gentrification. Pride and deep knowledge of local history and politics has made Oaklanders wary of the outside experts who were not grounded in the lived realities of their community. High superintendent turnover, venture philanthropy gone awry, and displacement of many of the district’s working-class constituents has led to calls for “local” superintendents and “homegrown” efforts. Long-term leadership is not valued in an educational marketplace that relies on constant churn. A lot falls on school leaders, who ultimately get the praise and blame for the outcomes despite multitude of factors and people involved in “achievement.” Since NCLB, longer tenure is not celebrated because it leaves more room for highs and lows — that is, a higher possibility of earning a bad reputation. There is an incentive to leave before their ambitious initiatives sour. This is related to superintendent training institutes and how universities and think tanks are implicated in shaping the ideologies of new leaders in cultivating their skills and networks.

In a 2017 infographic put together by the Justice For Oakland Schools Coalition (J4OS) reads, “a revolving door of superintendents has led OUSD to fail a majority of Black and Brown students.” It points to the eight superintendents in 16 years as a symbol that leaders “are more invested in their next career move than in Oakland youth.”

Figure 9: J4OS Infographic on the Churn of OUSD Superintendents



The committee ultimately chose Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, a “homegrown” OUSD administrator born, raised, and educated in Oakland who also worked as a teacher and principal in the district before moving into central office. An African American woman, a range of stakeholders people described her with a lot of respect for her commitment to equity and communication with families. She started the position in 2018 with large expectations for what she could achieve but with large financial and political challenges. Inheriting a million-dollar deficit, Superintendent Johnson-Trammell has continued with many of the same portfolio initiatives out of concern that the district would be put into another receivership if they didn’t make drastic cuts.

Berkeley

Family Engagement Office

The theory of action outlined by United in Action (UIA) is that family engagement is the missing link between district and city collaboration. UIA member and parent Santiago Casal explained, “The district hasn’t engaged with families, more focused on children.” In a document compiled in 2012, the organization detailed the role for an equity office within BUSD that would serve. In 2010, UIA worked on another layer of parent engagement, where UIA worked independently (Chancellors Grant) with District and Consultant Will Walker to train parents (UIA/Casal, 2012). The document summarized the purpose of the grassroots organization:

The objective was to make sure that parents will increasingly have a new role in the equation, particularly under the emerging idea of Family Advocates at selected schools, and a Family Advisory Council – an intermediary parent body (part of the Family/Student Support Network) that will serve as an across the board sounding board and advisory to both the City of Berkeley and to the School Board and Superintendent. BOCA, CLASS and PCAD [racial justice organizations] will help sustain this effort as well with inclusive representation.

This vision for a proposed “intermediary team” (Figure 10) became the blueprint for the Office of Family Engagement and Equity. This plan demonstrates the need for support for families and students of color to be integrated into the administrative level, as well as the effectiveness of community mobilization in institutionalizing these demands into a full-fledged department.

Figure 10. United In Action Community Engagement Blueprint



Berkeley Unified, however, does have a variety of district-led groups school site councils (SSC), parent advisory committees (PAC), DELAC, P&O committee and PTA. These more formal community engagement vehicles have quite active representation of parents, teachers, and community members. Most committees are White-led. BUSD administrator Ann Callegari explained her experience as a Black mother in the district:

Yeah, I worked in these formal committees. When I look back at that time, of course, I felt like I was being productive. I felt like there were things being done. However, what happens is that after a while you find yourself going through the motions. Back then, it was like your

physical presence was what you felt was needed. That physical presence never, back then, even connected with the word "equity," "adversity."

Instead of coalescing around advocacy organizations, current efforts around racial equity focus on engaging parents directly with the district. Some parents, like Laura Babbitt, who has "been on basically every committee," expressed the challenges of gathering parents around BUSD's community engagement committees:

[T]he parent advisory council, PTAs, school site councils — that's so many meetings. That's so much time. I found that in all these meetings, people end up not questioning the authority figures enough. And it's not even about their background or their race so much as it is about the initial trust you have. Like, 'Well, if you're superintendent, then this must be this. If you're the principal, this must mean this.' And I'm like, no, that's not what that means. This data is showing me this is happening. Parents can be upset with their principal, but then feel like they don't want to make their principal mad. Why? These people work for you. Their job is to make sure that these children are being educated. If they're not doing that, it's our job to pressure them. I want to do a lot in the next few years to really open parents' capacity.

With few non-profits and other civic and market-based advocacy organizations shaping education reform, families in Berkeley Unified are in more direct communication with the district and their schools. This is unique from urban districts, especially in the Bay Area where there is a plethora of social justice-oriented non-profits. This was not always the case, as many organizations left or became defunct by the mid-2000s following the displacement of working-class Black and Latinx families since their purpose was to support parents and students through social services or cultural empowerment. Laura explained:

PCAD (Parents of Children of African Descent) is still around, but it's taken many different forms. Not many different forms but there have been many changes because leadership changes, and people change, and gentrification changes things. The dynamics have changed. Now, they're trying to rebuild and they're at the high school. They are still so well-known from all the good work, that even while they're going through this redevelopment process, their name is still known. I was a part of PCAD from way back then, too. If something happened where advocacy was needed, that name can bring people out to do the advocacy. PCAD, back then, seemed to me [...] like it was something outside of the school district. Now it seems like it's something inside.

In the district's community engagement meeting overview, PCAD is listed alongside all of the other district engagement groups, illustrating some institutionalization of the historically ad-hoc organization.

The Office of Family Engagement and Equity (OFEE) actively reaches out to families of color to encourage their involvement depending on what best fits for them. Ann Callegari broke down her role as its founding director and the challenges in expanding a new office:

People choose for themselves, but we try to cultivate those leaders. We actually outreach to families and encourage them to get on these different parent groups, the PTA, Site Council, affinity groups, black parents, Latino parents, ELAC, DELAC, et cetera. What we also do is we try to go to those meetings with them to support them. Because, just like I told you my experience way back when, it's still the same thing today where there's a culture of a certain

group of people... with time. When you're talking about things like BSEP, PNL Committee, and your School Site Committees, you're talking a lot of numbers. Oh my God, it can drive you crazy, right? It can make you feel like you don't belong there. What we do is we try to teach parents how to make sure that they bring up issues at those meetings. It doesn't have to be that way. That's really, I think, a good way to exclude people. You have to have a base knowledge to be able to feel comfortable raising your hand, only to find out that everybody else has no idea what these people are talking about.

Because these initial experiences on school site council or the PTA can be exclusionary, or at least filled with microaggressions, Callegari is careful with pushing anyone who might not feel comfortable and could eventually be discouraged to take on leadership. Instead, equity infrastructure needs to be built into the changing composition of district committees:

There are some years we are so successful at getting so many people, and people of color, on those committees. But now what we have to make sure that we do is to educate them and support them, appropriately. You know those silos at the site level but also at the district level, we need to make sure that we are appropriately supporting families in those committees. That has to be built into the infrastructure of support, that equity infrastructure, right? If you're going to get black people and brown people on the PTA, then the PTA is not going to be the same old PTA. You have to be talking about, and implementing, programs and processes that are inclusive of the people who are part of the decision making. Back then, that wasn't the way it was. You just were trying to prove that you qualify to be on that position. That somehow your blackness didn't matter.

Because a lot of the staff are parents of color themselves, there is a stronger connection to the families they are serving, “they are sharing that experience with parents so they can advocate and navigate together.”

Discussion

This chapter examines the relationship between community engagement and governance reform in shaping ideologies and practices in urban school districts. It is a complex and multifaceted process to engage people directly with government institutions, political officials, and public services. Governance is the space where compromises are made and theories of action are met with complex realities. Debates around organizational efficiency and fiscal responsibility in Berkeley Unified and Oakland Unified illuminate the tensions between competing visions of schooling, particularly concerning loaded ideas like “equity outcomes” and “democratic engagement.” In comparing the differences and similarities in each district’s place-based conceptions of power and democracy in governance restructuring, or lack thereof, Oakland Unified’s portfolio district reflects the third-way approach of network governance while Berkeley Unified’s public governance model symbolizes a steadfast commitment to a public good that still struggles to authentically engage its marginalized families. Together, these cases demonstrate how democratic mechanisms serve as the vehicle to manufacture public consent for district redesign, increasingly moving toward marketization.

Market-making in education has relied less on brute force and more on convincing the public of the merit of market principles — a “war of position” in the Gramscian sense (1971). In order to garner support for charter school laws, mayoral takeovers, and school choice policies, “the public itself must be convinced of the merit of market or market-like principles, especially the principle of choice as a means of empowerment for students and their families” (Cohen & Lizotte,

2015, p. 2). Oakland Unified is a prime case of this shift in strategy through policymaking. As Chapter 5 outlined, the creation of a parastatal audit agency along with multiple attempts at a state takeover of OUSD was a coercive strategy that demarcated the line between external and local provision of Oakland's public schools. In this chapter, I examined the ramifications of such a disciplinary approach, which incited backlash and politicized many parents/guardians, educators, and community members. The *hegemonic bloc*, comprised of intergovernmental policy actors and business leaders across the U.S. and California, had to maintain neoliberal hegemony through other means. The process was intentional for some, but for many involved, it was less about an ideological commitment as much as adhering to market orthodoxy — “there is no alternative” (TINA) as Margaret Thatcher infamously said about the efficiencies and inevitability of the privatization of public services. While state, city, and district leaders held steadfast to this notion, they soon realized that the resistance might grow too strong and sought another path. The portfolio strategy would become the policy solution, a compromise of sorts, that felt organic to local pressures and history of reform.

Here, I find the link between network governance theory (Bevir, 2003) and portfolio strategy to be useful in understanding how this latest reform converges and diverges with the broader hegemonic paradigm of neoliberal education. Portfolio districts, like networks, are a third way approach in response to the failures of the market (economy) and bureaucracy (government) (Davies, 2011). The revolving door of superintendents, the seven-member school board, and consultants claimed that Oakland has “too many schools,” and sought to close neighborhood schools even when research has not shown closures to improve revenue in districts. Remaining neighborhood schools were marketed to fit in to, and compete with, the diverse array of school choice options. Yet advocates of Oakland's “Community of Schools” policy also cited the many problems with charter schools. Redesigning central office was one attempt to rein in the many problems that ensued from decades of private contracting with faulty provision, let alone authentic forms of democratic oversight. Rather than marketing yet another reform, this was the rational solution to creating an even playing field. Akin to proponents of network governance (including scholars who have not critically assessed the concept nor the practice), advocates' attempts to address the problems with charter schools appealed to funders and disillusioned families alike (the “elites” and “subalterns”). However, the promise of increased transparency and equity gave way to more mistrust and inefficiency, which is in line with research on local cases in Europe (citations).

The creation and implementation of the portfolio strategy was supported through new *modalities*, as well as new *discursive strategies* (Anderson and Donchik, 2016). Its many changing names was one discursive strategy, where terms like “1Oakland,” “community of schools,” and “citywide strategies” evoke a city pride intensified under gentrification. Yet, the things left unsaid revealed just as much as what was discussed. As public conversations about the portfolio strategy pushed for more equity, how this combination of policies have changed democratic participation remained outside of advocates' rhetoric. The *hegemonic bloc* (citation) eventually had to respond community members and staff who were vocal about their discontent with these changes. Despite some concessions, as seen in the Blueprint for Quality Schools, new modalities evolved. Systems like common enrollment and new school “incubators” developed in partnership with intermediaries like Educate78. Aside from strategies and modalities, I found that the portfolio district in OUSD has lasting effects on communities, with some of the most devastating consequences stemming from school closures. Here we find the key contradiction of portfolio districts. For all of the claims of efficiency, as seen in the stripping of democratic mechanisms, the portfolio model continued to destabilize the district because its blueprint relies on churn while ignoring the profoundly unequal political economic conditions that define many of the district's financial problems. On the ground, however, even staunch advocates are aware of the profound disinvestment in public education, and

yet reorganization seems more practical than fighting for increased funding at the state and federal levels.

In comparison, Berkeley Unified is a case of both *counter-hegemonic* and *sub-hegemonic* strategies (Sum 2004, 2005) to the neoliberal hegemony. Unlike many distressed cities turning to private contracting, a strong commitment to the “public good” guides the policies, practices, and culture of Berkeley. Current BUSD policies are mainly focused on curriculum and instruction, where teachers are viewed as the experts as opposed to intermediary consultants. Their practice is the result of a strong union (see Chapter 7), but these values are also shared by progressive staff and school board members. Berkeley is as successful for what it has accomplished as much as for what it managed to keep out: venture philanthropy and other power players in the edu-preneur network. Building on findings from the previous chapter, a stable local economy, thanks to the major public university in its backyard, has strengthened the civic capacity of the education community to take seriously the alternative approaches to neoliberal reform, not the least of which was an ambitious integration plan that has been challenged, unsuccessfully, in the courts multiple times. The BUSD is not spared from political and economic pressures, but having more wealth to redistribute has meant local constituents hold more influence in education matters, which in turn has strengthened aspects of its civic engagement. However, this fall along lines of race and class.

Non-profit organizations left Berkeley as their working-class constituents were displaced by the rising cost of living, and foundations were less interested in supporting (or experimenting with) stable districts with an engaged community despite the need for support in racial justice initiatives. With nowhere else to turn to, parent of color activism fought for more services within central office, which spurred the creation of BUSD’s Office of Family Engagement and Equity in 2014. While some participants felt that this “insular approach” prevented Berkeley from being more entrepreneurial, the economic and organizational stability maintained via local democratic decision-making and structural support has been beneficial for the marginalized youth and families who remain in the district. But the “kumbaya” approach, veering towards colorblindness amongst some parents and political leaders, lacked the urgency to tackle the racial injustice in their own backyard. What looked like a promising “public-public” partnership through the 2020 Vision eventually petered off when institutional leaders were no longer held accountable to families.

In analyzing its civic-oriented initiatives less common for urban districts, BUSD is also a case of more insidious forms of privatization and stratification. Some aspects of neoliberal reform did get taken up in Berkeley through sub-hegemony, where support for standardized testing was justified as an equity strategy to combat the stark racial achievement gap as opposed to other market-based reforms like charter and other school choice. The attendance zones created to maintain racial diversity was a redistributive approach, however, some former principals expressed pressure to market their schools to the early enrollment (privileged) parents and compete with private schools. And while parent and other local fundraising is quite different from venture philanthropy, it has led to inequalities between schools and within schools (these micropolitics are explored in greater detail in Chapter 7). More relevant to the Berkeley case, however, are the *managerialist* tendencies among district leaders and staff. As Clarke and Butcher (2009) explain, managerial discourse perpetuates “an illusion of participation that obscures institutionalized power relationships” (p. 590 as cited in Davies, 2011, p. 115). Naming and interrogating managerialism across sectors provides the groundwork for a critique of bureaucracy, where notions of ‘professionalism’ maintain that experts know best:

Indeed, given the action agenda of various experts, including social-policy specialists, the lower strata of society found themselves often regarded as obstacles rather than as attractive

allies (Stone, 1980). Addressing the resulting disconnections and misalignment thus becomes a challenge in the revitalization of local democracy. [...] Along with market biases, another structural challenge stems from the growing complexity of contemporary life. Complexity raises the hurdles of reconciling democracy with “techno-bureaucratic administration” (Fung and Wright, 2003: 3). In dealing with society’s lower ranks most professionals see themselves as the embodiment of essential expertise. Moreover, “reinvented government,” despite its customer orientation (Osbourne and Plastrik, 1997), has pushed the master source of expertise to a point remote from the direct provision of public services. As put by Marquand: “Trust...was displaced from professionals directly engaged in service delivery to more remote professionals engaged in scrutinizing other professionals” (2004:111). The British experience with the audit explosion parallels the education reform process in the US. (Stone, 2009, p. 267, 270).

Technocratic approaches to school improvement are exacerbated through privatization, as seen in Oakland’s portfolio district, but these tensions have been a part of the fabric of bureaucracy. The misalignment between policy specialists and community members continues to cause tensions within and outside BUSD’s central office.

This brings us to Stone’s (2009) call to rethink urban politics in light of democratic ideals. Specifically, these findings illuminate how community engagement mechanisms in districts have been prioritized under pressure from families and other community stakeholders. But committees, listening sessions, and board meetings can also serve as a tool for “manufacturing consent” for district marketization. When *coercive* strategies such as a state takeover, or even school closures to an extent, caused widespread backlash, district and intermediary leaders turned to strategies that would build *consent* among stakeholders so that they would feel a part of the process that ultimately led to the same means: budget cuts and more private contracting. As Davies (2011) reiterates in his Gramscian approach to governance, coercion and consent are on the same continuum of hegemony, where the tacit threat of coercion is key to building consent for dominant ideas. The empirical challenge is “to understand the dynamics of coercion, consent and resistance that constitute any hegemonic configuration” (Davies, 2011, p. 103). In the case of district restructuring, the disciplinary measures are financial audits, and the fear of losing the limited and performative democratic representation and local control has pushed leaders to continue to make decisions that have proven harmful for working class Black and Brown communities.

The democratic dimensions are even more clear when situating the current initiatives within the context of reform in the late 1990s and 2000s to reframe how state disinvestment affected each district in similar and distinct ways. Experimentation with governing and other projects was contradictory: people sought new outlets for empowerment that would bring more autonomy for their schools from bureaucratic restraints, and yet it deepened the influence of other elite policy actors. In Berkeley, small schools created community and belonging for some students while deepening stratification. The experimentation and reform in the 1970s and later the 2000s did not create a groundswell of philanthropic influence because BUSD remained buffered. In Oakland, community groups had more leverage over the district through partnerships with education reform advocacy organizations. These range of opportunities opened the floodgate for an education marketplace within OUSD, but more importantly, the district became a piece of a larger puzzle, thrust in competition with CMOs, private schools, and neighboring districts. Around the time of the 2003 state receivership, OUSD’s central office was permeated by new political actors from the private and non-profit sphere along with austerity measures. These problems laid the groundwork for new solutions to arise that would attempt to create some coherency amid the financial mismanagement, disruptive school closures, and growing disillusion amongst community members.

This comparative analysis of BUSD and OUSD illuminates the functions of each model through a typology and how its consequences reverberate throughout school communities overtime. Furthermore, analysis of each district's budget reveals ideas about which people and resources should be prioritized and valued. The process by which financial decisions are made brings into question the legitimacy of various equity approaches and the critical relevance of informal policy. Resistance and strife are key aspects of the implementation of district programs and policies, where the changes to central office reveal important insights into competing visions of the purpose of schooling.

Chapter 7: The Power of Education Regimes in Shaping (Counter-)Hegemonic Policies and Politics

This chapter on local politics and education regimes answers my third research question and sub-questions, which ask: *What are the race and class politics of each district's coalition-building efforts? In what ways do regimes gain and wield influence in education reform? What are the guiding values and goals, strategies, and networks of the stakeholders comprising each regime? How have resistance and alternatives to marketized governance been mobilized, and by whom?* Drawing on interview data and fieldnotes, I compare how community members navigate governance reform in their respective districts by examining the role of urban regimes in carving out networks to build power in order to affect change via their school district. I bring together concepts from urban regimes analysis, like *civic capacity* (Stone et al., 2001), with theories of *sub-hegemony* and *counter-hegemony* (Sum, 2004, 2005) to locate context-specific examples of *neoliberal translations and refusals* (Wilkins, 2018).

Findings demonstrate that education regimes are critical in bridging dominant ideas with local pressures to create the semblance of authenticity for philanthropic projects, and reveal key changes, contradictions, and fissures in the hegemony of market-oriented education reforms. In Oakland, a portfolio regime encompassing diverse policy actors and stakeholders has grown to prominence over the last decade with the support of national advocacy organizations and venture philanthropists, who aimed to distance themselves from past charter school advocacy messaging while continuing to support the institutionalization of private contracting. One advocacy organization at the heart of Oakland's education regime, Great Oakland Public Schools (GO), has been a key local anchor to a national movement by mobilizing a grassroots approach to private contracting, school closures, and charter school expansion in the name of equity, unity, and compromise. In contrast, school reform efforts in Berkeley have largely stayed within the district's oversight given the limited private sector interest in its public school, which is a source of pride or frustration depending on the stakeholder. Compared to Oakland, the civic regime in Berkeley is less explicitly a coalescing of policy actors with a plan, but rather a decades-long effort that has maintained the power of white parents in controlling the schooling opportunities for people of color in the community. The racial politics in Oakland function differently, with more district and charter leaders of color, as well as GO and other market-oriented education reform advocacy organizations, yet are funded by philanthropists and executive who are White and also determining the direction of education for low-income youth of color.

Challenges and alternatives to these regimes look different as well: multiracial coalitions in Berkeley have organized around different racial equity initiatives, most recently through a cross sector strategy to close the stark Black-White achievement gap, while Oakland has been rife with protests against school closures and mobilizations against millions of dollars in budget cuts that disproportionately impact majority-Black schools and neighborhoods. In short, the ideals and strategies of each education regime differs based on their district's *civic capacity*, which is the ability of diverse stakeholders to mobilize around and solve collective problems in the public sector (Pinderhughes, 2002; Stone, 2001; Stone et al., 2001). Each case reveals how civic capacity defines how power-building is dependent on versus buffered from philanthropic and other entrepreneurial influences on local education initiatives and central office reorganization.

Urban regimes are defined as long-standing governing coalitions that extend beyond formal government to include business interests, and more specifically, education regimes are urban regimes in the education sector (Mossberger, 2009; Stone, 1993). Urban regimes in education, or *education regimes*, played a powerful role in Oakland and Berkeley, operating as the local conduits for building the power needed to define the directions and strategies of school district reform. I argue that a

governing regime maintains power dynamics and policy options, while guiding, if not preventing, change from happening. In Oakland, the portfolio strategy followed various iterations of self-surveillance and monitoring finances in the name of equity. In Berkeley, public governance was buffered by its civic capacity and the values of its power players. However, in line with a long legacy of welfare state policies (Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011), protecting public schools through specific strategies came at the expense of authentically engaging with families of color. I argue that this comparative case study reveals two distinct forms of politics, a *politics of contestation* versus a *politics of complacency*, that underpin coalitional efforts to transform the educational conditions of marginalized students. This analysis of regime politics in two adjacent districts helps us to understand how community and elite stakeholders grapple with policy frames. In each district, these regimes defined the parameters of what is possible, from narrow market-based or social stratification strategies to alternative possibilities for change.

First, I trace the emergence and consolidation of various actors at the local and national arenas aligned with these two regimes over the last twenty years. Second, I discuss the goals, values, and messaging surrounding governance, democracy, and equity that underpin each regime, distinguishing between political and discursive strategies. Third, I examine the strategies used in each regime to build influence on the ground and exercise their power. Fourth, I analyze how each regime is being resisted and by whom within the political context of contestation and complacency. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

Education Regimes: Policy Actors and Community Stakeholders

The organizations and people that comprise each education regime differ in key ways. In Oakland, the earlier formations of a portfolio regime (1999-2006) disbanded then rebranded itself coming out of state takeover (2007-2019) to address the detrimental effects of 25 years of market-based reforms by bridging leaders in district and charter sectors to build what was intended to be a new vision for its public schools. In Berkeley, the multiracial equity-based coalition (2002-2009) lost momentum once their ideas were institutionalized and gentrification displaced working class families of color from the district, leaving the long-standing regime of White parents and civic actors mostly intact. Moreover, these “local” politics were not confined to the parameters of a city. Whereas Oakland had more outside actors’ ideas (such as the Gates, Walton, and Broad Foundations along with Teach For America) penetrate the local sphere, the civic capacity of Berkeley, upheld by the regime, buffered the district from the influence of market-based advocacy and funding.

Oakland

The Origins of the Portfolio Regime

In Oakland, a sophisticated, highly connected, and diverse education regime that I call the *portfolio regime* sought to build on community members’ frustrations with district policies and charter reforms, among other managerial and market-based initiatives. Grounded in private sector policy entrepreneurialism, this regime is comprised of foundations, education reform advocacy organizations, political action committees, city officials, district staff, and a growing ecosystem of intermediary organizations that include an innovation hub, venture philanthropists, and technical assistance on operations and talent management. Its leadership has grown influential from early work during the state takeover in 2003 up to the recent developments of the portfolio district in 2018. The shifting actors within the regime reveal the changing politics of school reform that policy elites needed to adapt to, namely, the immense pushback to school closures.

The first iteration (1999-2007) of the market-based portfolio regime included the Gates Foundation and Walton Foundation, Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools (BAYCES, now National Equity Project), and Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). Together, these three sectors - philanthropic, intermediary, grassroots - combined to create a shift in Oakland's policy terrain just as the district was undergoing state receivership.

For Emma Paulino, OUSD parent and current OCO community organizer, her engagement with the faith-based community organization was an “eye-opening” experience. As a resident in East Oakland whose son was having problems in school, Paulino had been internalizing his learning challenges and convinced herself that it was due to the differences between the American schooling system and her home country of Mexico, until she saw a map of the API test scores across Oakland. She recalled the struggles that brought her to organizing parents through OCO:

I didn't know how to advocate for him. I didn't know how to really name what the problem was. [...] One day one of the organizers brought a map with the schools in the flatlands and the hills. That was really an eye-opener for me like, "Really, this is happening?" I asked the question around, "Is this another school district?" He said, "No, it's the same school district." I said, "Well, my child is not a second-class child. I believe my child is something better." I got really involved. I was really on fire when I saw this map. That was the map for me, the turning point, when I felt like, "It's going to be over my dead body... my children have to be successful."

Her frustration fueled her investment in informing and mobilizing other parents, mostly immigrant, through house meetings and one-on-one conversations. And so began the grassroots arm of the portfolio regime that was fueled by parent frustration with their education system and eventually united with private funders. Based on the PICO power-building model, parents began confiding in each other about the academic challenges their children faced with little to no response to their concerns. She continued, “People start to feel comfortable talking about that. We stopped — I’m including myself — we stopped blaming our own children. Because that's the thing, I was blaming my son.”

Paulino recounted how OCO mobilized over 200 parents and teachers in November of 1999 to attend a community meeting at a neighborhood church around three demands: to pass a small school policy, to end multi-track year-round practices (to ease overcrowding), and instead “allow new schools to come into Oakland” (Davidson, 2003). Unlike today’s context of “under-enrollment” and “under-utilization” of school facilities, Paulino depicts the Oakland of the late 1990s as a place that was starved of new schools. This action was a thoroughly planned event that involved behind-the-scenes conversations with elected officials, from State Senator Don Peralta and Mayor Jerry Brown to school board directors. With pressure mounting on the remaining undecided school board directors, the New Small Autonomous Schools Policy was passed unanimously by the board in May 2000 (May, 2000). Soon after, with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a group from Oakland including Emma, OCO organizers, educators, board member David Kakishiba, and TFA teacher at Manzanita Elementary, Larissa Adam¹⁹ went to Chicago to visit schools “to see what was possible.” By the time they returned to the airport, Adam, Paulino and OCO organizers had decided to start Oakland’s first small autonomous school.

OCO gained national attention – followed by substantial philanthropic funding—through their advocacy for small schools. By fall of that year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation donated

¹⁹ Larissa Adam went on to become a school principal and in 2018 became the Superintendent of Education for Change Public Schools, a charter management organization

an initial \$15.7 million (eventually totaling \$40 million) to fund Oakland's small schools movement led by Oakland Community Organizations and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (now known as The National Equity Project) (Gates Foundation, 2000). This was in addition to seed money from local and major foundations, including Annie E. Casey, the San Francisco Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation (Davidson, 2003). Moreover, the Oakland Public Education Fund was established in 2003 to increase and centralize fundraising for district and charter schools and advocacy organizations along with the Rogers Family Foundation, local philanthropists interested in reforming Oakland's public schools. In 2005, OCO went on to become a community partner in the 25-million-dollar central office reorganization (Gates Foundation, 2005). An intermediary partner, BAYCES, provided technical and political tools for implementing small schools and other educational reforms and programs. Mirella Rangel, former board member at BAYCES and director of community organizing at GO, explained the links: "[BAYCES] brought that tool set, and OCO brought the organizing, and then BAYCES ended up being the recipient of the grant. And then they were like, 'how do we create the teams to start small schools?'" The executive director of BAYCES, Steve Jubb, went on to work for the district as a consultant in their redesign process during the state receivership (2003-2009).

This era of the portfolio regime advanced decentralization in the district. During this time (1999-2006), parents rallied together in large events to pressure elected leaders, intermediary organizations like BAYCES gained access to the district under a state administrator, organizers flew across the country to visit other small schools, the Gates' Foundation gained national attention for cutting checks in Oakland, and a sense of belonging was fostered for some students and teachers within their small schools. However, small schools' leaders faced three challenges. First, sustaining a labor-intensive project proved difficult with staff burnout and turnover. The second challenge was an increase in tensions with other families, sometimes within the same school building, as new school openings had an immediate impact on neighboring schools that led to closures. Lastly, the Gates foundation pulled their funding from Oakland's small schools in 2009 after their national assessment of the effort concluded that small schools were ineffective (Gates Foundation, 2019).

During this period there was no school board authority due to the state takeover. Paradoxically, this increased OCO's influence since they only had to win over one state administrator. Paulino explained,

[State Administrator Ward] couldn't deny that that was true because parents were saying, "I have a relationship with the teachers. Now I can go to the teacher and there's an open door. I can make an appointment with the school principal, something that never happened before." The ownership from the community was there, very solid, and he was smart enough to say, "I need to continue building up," and he said, "I'm not going to oppose something good happening. I'm here to support whatever good is happening and of course to take care of whatever is not happening."

While under receivership, from 2003-2009, State Administrator Randy Ward, closed seven comprehensive middle and high schools and replaced them with 40 small schools – mostly concentrated in Oakland's poorest neighborhoods (Green, 2019).

Building these movements came with consequences. According to people inside and outside of small schools, opening new schools had an immediate impact on the closures of neighborhood schools. Nidya Baez, vice principal at Fremont High, explained that school choice more broadly, including open enrollment of OUSD high schools, disrupted feeder patterns. This divide fell on racial lines, with exceptions, as the small schools in African American communities and neighborhoods were quickly closed poorer academic outcomes while many in the non-Black Latinx

community continued to thrive with faith-based mobilization (Green, 2019). Lastly, once the Gates Foundation pulled their million-dollar funding, the small schools movement died down soon after and the schools themselves could not survive without external support. For all of the focus on autonomy, there was not a plan on the district's nor BAYCES' parts to sustain implementation without millions of dollars in private funds. According to professor, educator, TFA alum, and charter school CEO Jeff Duncan-Andrade, philanthropies like Gates and Broad treated students and teachers like "hamsters" in an experiment where "they gave us just enough money to hang ourselves."

For these reasons, OCO eventually moved away from reforms centered on experimenting with district governance and finances, turning towards immigration issues. Once OCO changed direction based on membership needs, BAYCES went national and focused less on Oakland, and the Gates Foundation pulled their funding out of Oakland, this left a chasm in the earlier iteration of the market regime.

Portfolio Regime 2.0

The culture of mistrust between community and bureaucracy deepened under OUSD's growing deficit to the point of crisis. These historically contingent factors shaped the landscape for an evolving regime. For education activists radicalized by Occupy Wall Street, these changes meant problems for their schools. For one local millionaire, this meant opportunity. The Rogers Family foundation, a local foundation focused "on transforming public education in Oakland, California" was founded in 2003 -- the same year that the receivership began. Brian Rogers,¹⁰⁴ CEO of the Rogers Family foundation and the founder's son, explained the opportunities made possible with the transition from an elected, representative school board to a state administrator,

We came in right when the state receivership was happening. I think we saw it as an opportunity where, on one hand, it was terrible. [...] On the other hand, when that happens, it makes it extremely easy to make decisions that are very tough for a superintendent. The politics get stripped out of it. We saw it as an opportunity to try and change the district in some ways.

And so began the influential trajectory of Great Oakland (GO) Public Schools in 2009, an education reform advocacy organization (ERAO) that would carry out the foundation's vision of reform through a blend of advocacy with increasing access of intermediary organizations in district services. It would be a grassroots movement, according to its leaders, and a key funnel for million-dollar grants, one whose vision won't stray, according to Rogers:

Part of our strategy at the Foundation is, because there is not consistency, you've got to create community partners and community organizations that will hold the mission and move it forward regardless of who the superintendent is or who the school board is. When I first came on, I really did feel as if the Oakland education debate and dialogue that was going on was between the district and the teacher's union, and that there really wasn't a parent voice.

GO Public Schools was intended to bring more of a "local" twist to their advocacy projects, and yet remain more embedded in the charter-friendly reform world. But more importantly, it needed to have leaders that weren't going to change directions, as OCO did. Rather, this grassroots arm would need to toe the line, and push for "better instruction and innovation." According to Rogers:

I think OCO is this organization that listens to its members and drives initiatives based on what the members want, which I think is great in some instances, but in other instances, that can lead to a strategy that's a little bit back and forth sometimes as opinions change. We needed an advocacy organization that could really just say, "These are things that we're all about. We're about quality schools, we're about parent voice, we're about holding the school board accountable," and drive those issues forward. We helped to create GO Public Schools. Again, controversial. Some groups in Oakland don't like the fact that there's more information out there now, that the school board agendas are out for everybody to see that, that we're trying to digest it for people, so that they can read it.

In an early profile of GO Public Schools, *Teach For America Magazine* identified the organization and its founder Jonathan Klein, a TFA alum, as part of the “slow, steady revolution” of school reform in Oakland (Tyre, 2010). Part of GO’s appeal was making stakeholder-turned-leaders feel like “insiders.” For Rangel, the closed events they hosted was reminiscent of her time on the board of BAYCES, and she worked as a GO organizer in 2013, eventually becoming one of their board members:

When I started as a community organizer, before I joined the staff at GO, it reminded me of BAYCES where they were the policy people, and then they would partner with OCO. OCO was like the base of parents, or they would partner with other organizations. And at some point, they had passed some policies with OCO and with other organizations, but there was no implementation, which is like one of the main problems that a lot of cities and districts have, and OUSD definitely has it. GO was like, ‘we need to do community organizing because in order for us to ensure that implementation is happening, we need to have a base of people who are going to advocate for that. And OCO was doing lots of other things that were probably really great, but we need to advocate for implementation.’

Implementation was key for the new iteration of the portfolio regime. In other words, the vision and initiatives, which blended market-based ideas with selective representation of more marginalized communities, would need to be realized.

The staff and board at GO have weaved in and out of positions in OUSD, consulted at the municipal level, and have grown increasingly influential across Northern California once the organization expanded to include Fresno and West Contra Costa districts. At the forefront of the education reform scene, Oakland has been the site of experimentation with new types of intermediary organizations. The policy ecosystem grew to include the Oakland Public Schools Fund and Educate78. Founded in 2018 with staff support from GO Public Schools, the Oakland REACH is the newest arm that has turned deeper into parent mobilization. They have a noticeably distinct base than most of Oakland’s ‘edu-preneur’ scene: more working class and African American families from Oakland. In short, the portfolio regime has been continuously growing in influence and adapting to challenges and criticism, while being met with some resistance, as I explain in greater detail later in this chapter.

Parent advocacy has changed drastically over the last two decades, moving away from the traditional structures of parent advocacy, like the PTA, to the non-profit sector. And in the last decade, even the non-profit parent and community engagement organizations have shifted in how their members secure grants from foundations. Instead of non-profits seeking funding for projects, foundation leaders are more aggressive about controlling the purpose and use of their funds by grantees. The rise in venture philanthropy is coupled with the rise in ERAOs, marking the critical

intersection of grassroots organizing in manufacturing consent of neoliberal policy initiatives. Emblematic of this shift, GO is currently, in 2019, a key node in Oakland’s portfolio regime.

Local Pressures, Outsider Blueprint

For the many local stakeholders involved in OUSD’s redesign, many are tied to the outsiders they shun – venture philanthropists, state officials, and national advocacy organizations that have funded their local work have also been deeply invested in educational privatization industry. The portfolio regime is as much state and national as it is local, a point that Morel made in his analysis of state takeovers and “state-local regimes” (2018). Like the charter and school choice movement, the portfolio regime and national network encompass a range of actors with progressive and conservative beliefs that coalesce around a neoliberal strategy. Even within the portfolio regime, there is a lot of confusion and disagreement about where this idea to restructure central office around quality school choice options came from and how “organic” the portfolio project is to education struggles in Oakland.

Mike Hutchinson, a community organizer from the Oakland Public Schools Network and school board candidate, was driven by a deep anger with the political influence of local, national, and international foundations on education policy and community mobilization in Oakland. He explained, “[P]eople don’t realize just in general that Oakland is ground zero on the west coast for education reform.” The three major funders of education reform in Oakland are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation.

TABLE 5. Major Grants from the Gates and Walton Foundations (2019)

Foundation	Grantee	Amount
Gates	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$3,000,000
	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$220,275
	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$25,000,000
	KIPP Bay Area Schools	\$1,461,679
	Chiefs for Change	\$500,000
	GO Public Schools	\$250,029
	Teach for America, Inc.	\$769,786
	KIPP Foundation	\$182,261
	City Fund	\$11,400,000
Walton	California Charter School Association	\$2,250,000
	California Charter School Association	\$4,500,000
	City Fund	\$1,500,000
	Educate78	\$450,000
	Go Public Schools	\$250,000
	Go Public Schools	\$200,000
	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$1,170,950
	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$3,800,000
	NewSchools Venture Fund	\$648,130
	Silicon Schools Fund, Inc.	\$1,158,334

Source: The Gates Foundation, The Walton Family Foundation

As displayed in Table 5, the Oakland-based venture capitalist firm NewSchools Venture Fund has been pivotal in school innovation and redesign locally and nationally. Past “ventures” in Oakland include independent charters (Homies Empowerment, Latitude High School), charter networks (Education for Change, Leadership Public Schools), a non-profit (Kingmakers of Oakland), a district school (SOL Middle School), and an OUSD program (Latino/a Educator Recruitment & Retention) (NSVF “Ventures,” 2020). Furthermore, the Broad Foundation has continued their influence in OUSD since the state takeover in 2003 (see Chapter 5):

The [Broad] foundation has given to the school district in other ways: it has granted about \$6 million for staff development and other programs over the last decade. The Broad Center, which runs the superintendents’ academy, has subsidized the salaries of at least 10 ex-business managers who moved into administrative jobs at the district office. (Rich, 2016, para. 10)

These foundations also support other national organizations that support market-based initiatives in Oakland, such as Chiefs for Change and Charter School Board partners. The Oakland Public Education Fund, a local grant-making foundation for “all” Oakland public schools, is the fiscal sponsor and donor for a number of OUSD programs, including restorative justice, Asian Pacific Islander Student Achievement and African American Male Achievement programs, the Center, Linked Learning, and Newcomer Support — on top of managing the OUSD volunteer program. They also receive funding from Salesforce, Intel and other major corporations and foundations for local projects. Their service contracts with the district explicitly state that administrative positions are actually Ed Fun employees. Beyond educating and training district leaders, as the Broad Academy has done since 2002, venture philanthropist have created local spin-offs to gain more authenticity and trust in their advocacy work — ultimately to be more effective. Such is the case with New Schools Venture Fund providing the seed funding and infrastructure for Educate78, a design lab.

Others argued that district redesign has been authentic to the needs and politics of Oakland stakeholders. Rangel detailed how her early reactions to the portfolio idea were negative until she found ways to redefine the project as “homegrown.” As a new GO staff member, she recalls reading about portfolio districts and thinking “Whatever, this is just some capitalist bullshit.” But after GO published their *Informing Equity* report, their strategy pivoted from school specific organizing to “citywide” work, a term that is supposed to be more inclusive of charter school students. The market concepts previously confined to the “education reform world” began to resonate with this self-identified Leftist:

When we went to the Center for Reinventing Public Education conference, the way they talked about portfolio management was, “Which charter management agency should we invite to our city?” That is not our issue. We’re not trying to invite an outside entity into our city - that’s not how it rolls in Oakland. Our charter leaders are homegrown, for the most part.

She compares the portfolio strategy in Oakland to “permaculture,” in that the model was implemented to be responsive to the needs and resources of the city. In other words, she sees their work as place-based as opposed to a billionaire’s agenda.

It was helpful to hear how they’re thinking about it, and there are elements that we’re pulling in. But, for me, if we think of indigenous practices, it’s how do you do with what you have?

We were looking at the problem like, we think we have people who are smart, people are committed. There's a resource issue, for sure, but one of the reasons we're not able to move forward is because we're constantly fighting, and that's not helping.

Despite attending conferences by the CRPE, Rangel pushed back on the idea that it was conceived by outsiders. Some non-profit organizations defend themselves against being lumped into the same coalition of conservative funders, to which Hutchinson retorted, “You know Walton only funds people who politically agree with them.”

Upon a deeper examination of the history of portfolio politics, this “citywide approach” is more than a local priority. Its architects, Paul T. Hill and colleagues at the University of Washington, have refined these ideas in tandem with policy tools at the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE). Hill theorized that a moderate, centralized approach to managing education markets would take compromise. To Hill's surprise, it was a strategy that would eventually “sweep the nation”:

I knew that there were lots of interests that this would upset. One of the core principles of all the stuff I did from '93 on was that schools, essentially, had to employ teachers. How that would work, there's lots of different ways you could think about that, but that a school should decide who teaches there, and, in effect, teachers should also decide where they work. From my mind, that was an idea that came out of school coherency, but it certainly intersects with market theory. But I knew, to put it flatly, unions, all their power comes from making one agreement with the school board that governs the placement of every teacher. I knew unions wouldn't like this idea, even though I thought teachers might.

Despite pushback from unions about teacher protections, he had hoped these ideas “would infect the way people thought about it and it was just an alternative people had not thought about before, and that did happen. You get people coming onto school boards who've heard these ideas. The Mayor of Philadelphia is white. They read the book at night in bed, and they were working on how to do it.” The blueprint laid out by Hill and colleagues at the CRPE have spurred the work of new power players in education reform focused on expanding the portfolio across the country. Education Cities took CRPE's portfolio work even further, and then eventually split into two new organization: School Board Partners and Community Engagement Partners. And then the founders of The Mind Trust, which created “opportunity schools” in Indianapolis' portfolio of schools, decided to take their ideas national with The City Fund, created in 2018. With funding from, once again, Netflix founder Reed Hastings and Texas philanthropist John Arnold, The City Fund gives \$100 million in grants to grow charter and charter-like schools (Barnum, 2020).

Despite the progressive rhetoric and involvement of some self-identified Leftist organizers, the portfolio approach is ultimately decided with funding and resources from venture philanthropists trying a new hand at neoliberal education reform — one that they hope will not be disrupted by the grassroots pushback of their previous efforts.

Berkeley

Whiteness and Wealth: Parental Privilege Amid Redistribution

In contrast to Oakland, and previous case studies of urban regimes, the education regime in Berkeley is not so clearly defined and political leaders cannot be traced back to a specific network. But in studying the experiences of many working-class families of color in the district, it becomes clear how a regime of actors from public institutions and civic organizations, overwhelmingly White community members, create norms around the purpose of its public schools. Multicultural liberal

ideals carried by many White parents and political leaders stymied conversations on racism and educational inequity, and thwarted authentic community engagement. For some constituents, public governance in Berkeley was inclusive and accessible, even democratic, but that was not the experience of many working families of color (and some middle-class parents of color) interviewed, nor was it the case for those who spoke at board meetings. Racism and whiteness were pervasive issues that permeated beyond the district to the city at large, symbolic of the larger tensions around public education advocacy (Lipman, 2011).

The efforts around racial justice in Berkeley's schools and neighborhoods have been mobilized by multiracial coalitions at different points in the local history of school reform, but the 2020 Vision made many believe that change was impossible. The 2020 Vision began in 2009 as a citywide initiative that "strives to eliminate racial disparities in academic achievement in Berkeley's public schools" across a number of indicators including kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, college and career readiness, improved school attendance and health, and community and family engagement (Berkeley's 2020 Vision: Equity in Education, 2019). This vision was implemented through a number of programs and initiatives, such as expanding access to affordable child care, tutoring programs, and community outreach (City of Berkeley, 2018). This cross-sector initiative bridged research on social indicators with test score data as well as challenged the narrative about progressive Berkeley by taking accountability for the issue. According to BUSD board director Julie Sinai, "The city and the school district both passed the 2020 Vision resolution, and we decided that in order to really grapple with the inequities in the community, we have to do it together. We can't finger point, we can't blame. We have to do it together and we have to be held accountable by the community." Together, these efforts signaled a change for many White community members despite resistance by some to evidence of structural racism.

The BUSD arm of the 2020 Vision mostly centered on community engagement, which many parents of color located as an obstacle, along with representation on the board. This ambitious plan was unsuccessful, in the eyes of many interviewed, for a few reasons, such as the lack of integration into BUSD's strategic plan as well as what former superintendent Huyett called "analysis paralysis." Moreover, it was not necessarily meaningful to many people on the ground, particularly teachers and principals. This was due to the "communication problems" according to school board director Julie Sinai, "It didn't penetrate for the district. People were like, 'What is it?' And I still think if you talk to 10 people, you get 10 different answers." The focus on racial representation created change on the board, where all five directors in 2018 were endorsed by the 2020 Vision. As BFT president Cathy Campbell, a White woman, put it, "For some people it was enough to just elect people of color to the school board, to other people it was only worth doing that if they brought with them a certain agenda." Pastor Mike McBride who is African American, expressed his disappointment in some of the Black people in leadership positions in the city and the district working on the 2020 Vision and other education efforts:

[The focus] was "how do we build the capacity of families to endure or be successful in the system as it is?" None of it was like "we're going to transform this system. We're going to radically redistribute resources or shift the way this is ran." It was all, "we're going to get families to do better in this broken system." And I found it to be not very compelling.

Pastor McBride's quote exemplifies a critique of the complacency around education issues, even among education and community leaders of color. While he considered some of the work to be "effective and powerful," like city and district parent engagement meetings, most of the 2020 Vision was too reformist of an approach. Ann Callegari, an Afro-Belizean woman who works in the BUSD

administration, felt compelled to push the 2020 Vision through the discomfort of White privilege because Berkeley needed to live up to its progressive ideals:

I've always done things in a way that I felt added value to people who needed that. I think that we are in a society where you are fighting for things, especially when it's across racial lines, sometimes people really need to think before they attack you because they worry about what they look like. And this is Berkeley. So, I think that knowing this is Berkeley really made a difference in terms of feeling freer to be able to do that type of advocacy. It's seemed consistent with what Berkeley was supposed to be.

According to Callegari, Berkeley has a progressive reputation to uphold. When racial liberalism showed that staff or privileged parents were not living up to the equity rhetoric, it made it easier for other stakeholders to criticize them. There are worse educational experiences that students of color could get in other districts, but that does not justify unequal experience and inequitable resources between and within Berkeley's public schools. These are the contradictions of racial liberalism: universal ideas of justice that do not extend to all people in practice (Mills, 2017).

What Could've Been: United In Action and the 2020 Vision

As I detail in Chapter 6, reform efforts in Berkeley reveal the potential of public-*public* partnerships, as well as the limits of identifying schools as the sole source of “achievement gaps.” As a Berkeley parent and longtime community member, Santiago Casal provided insights on the internal struggles of his grassroots organization and how he navigated competing strategies for building power as one of its leaders during the mid-2000s. Upon arriving in Berkeley from San Diego in 1979 to find the “liberation zone,” the son of Cuban immigrants put down roots in this community with his partner, Toni, and their two children. His face lit up describing the origins of the organization where frustrated parents came together in 2003 to form a multiracial coalition called United in Action. The group was largely made up of representatives from African American and Latino advocacy groups in Berkeley, such as Latinos Unidos and Parents of Children of African Descent (PCAD), who shared a common concern in transforming public schools to tackle the high achievement gap facing Latino, Black, and low-income students. Their write-up from 2010 explained that the organization's “fundamental mission was to seek a School Board majority and to put forward an urgent educational vision that would lead Berkeley out of the darkness.”

Frustrations with an “unapproachable” White school board and largely privileged school site councils and PTAs prompted parents to get involved, such as Ann Callegari, director of BUSD's Office of Family Engagement and Equity. She had been working in the corporate sector during this time, when she joined Santiago Casal and others in United in Action to refocus the district on “how our students and families were treated, how they were educated, how they were accepted as part of the community. I remember, way back then, we realized that Black and Brown were not getting what they needed.” With a smile on her face, she recalled that era of ruffling feathers very fondly:

It felt radical. It was exciting. I'd do it all again. I love ruffling feather because what existed wasn't serving. I feel, and I felt, insulted. Taxation without representation sucks. So we did something about it. That's exactly how we felt. We marched through the streets. I'll never forget doing the marching when we were advocating and walking behind the naked guy. There's this guy that always walked naked in this parade. There we were behind the naked guy, but we didn't care. We were advocating.

A San Francisco native, Pastor McBride moved to Berkeley in 2005 when UIA was active and they were beginning to ramping up the 2020 vision. He described his five years there as a formative time, back when there were many more Black and Latinx residents in Berkeley, along with political strife during gentrification:

I was a person that was unique in the sense that [UIA] was always looking for more Black church, Black clergy involvement. Because still at that time a lot of the Black families attended our congregations. This was before Black families really got pushed out of Berkeley. By the time we did the census in 2010, I think just in my five years it was very clear black folks were just being shoved out of Berkeley. The property values were starting to go up. In those five years I literally watched Black folks in Berkeley and some Latino folks who mostly were renters [get displaced]. Bush was still in office at the time so they were doing these raids in Berkeley. We had to pass policies to get ICE out of Berkeley from raiding all of our Latino parents and families. They were knocking people's doors down.

Activism around racial and economic justice flourished because there was an urgent need for it, even in Berkeley, and there were the numbers to build political power in the city and school district. Parents, community, teachers, and faith leaders of color considered different strategies for achieving these demands. They ultimately settled on working with the district and other public institutions, but the idea of charter schools spoke to some members of UIA.

The United in Action document from 2010 references the Ethiopian proverb, “When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion” — a metaphor for unity among diverse communities and struggles. Group leaders warned against placing all hope in elections, even successful ones: “Even if all of our school board candidates win in November, we will need to support and guide them as they do their work. The member organizations of UIA need to understand that we need to lay the groundwork for systemic involvement by our adults and families. *We’ve got to change our relationship to power.*” The document also referenced Berkeley’s integration legacy as “a rock of Berkeley pride born of a moral imperative.” Yet it also described deeply unequal experiences that Black and Brown students face and claims these problems are ignored. This tension was captured in the poem Casal wrote:

Trouble in our garden...
Black and brown girls and boys
sitting next to white children
in integrated schools,
A rock of Berkeley pride
born of a moral imperative
to break down racial barriers
and spread the seeds
of what is right in the world
Yet, their desks
stationed side by side,
mask the enormous distance
between their futures
Our pride compromised
by the highest gap in the state
Our children suffering silent shame
or accruing superior advantage
In other towns, other cities,
segregated schools seize

opportunity born of failure,
distance ironically breeding
better futures
It is Harlem Children’s Zone kind of pride—
an artful unlocking of long denied potential
Such pride escapes Berkeley’s grasp
so very ironic our failure thus far
Once again, the new year is upon us,
Moms and Pops entrust us
with their most precious gift,
The bell rings
The clock ticks
Brown and Black boys and girls
take their seats
search our faces
seek our protection
Beautiful seeds
asking to flower in our garden
What will we....say to them?

I paused to let his words sink in. “It’s nice to hear you read that out loud,” Casal said. “What will we tell those kindergarteners in 2020?”

Casal’s poem made the prescient point about the unfulfilled potential of integrated schools. White and Black students sit side by side in the classrooms, yet their proximity “masks the enormous distance between their futures.” There are also hints of the benefits of charter schools in other cities, such as the Harlem Children’s Zone, which he described as segregated schools that “seize opportunity born of failure” with “distance ironically breeding better futures.” In the mid to late-2000s, there was a critical mass of disgruntled parents and community members that could have leveraged their political capital to build on the legacy of alternative and small schools to bring the charter school movement to Berkeley. In the sections that follow, I analyze how the civic regime recognized the change in politics and responded to UIA’s demands through capitulation and cooptation.

Union Power

Many people involved in Berkeley education identified the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) as a major power player and core to Berkeley’s civic regime. More than simply a labor perspective or policy actor, the teachers unions run the show in Berkeley while other unions exert their influence. BFT supports political candidates, determines the direction of policy initiatives, and advocates for Teachers on Special Assignment (TSAs) to replace the role of consultants. Community and family support of its teachers and district is exemplified by the overwhelming support for BSEP, a parcel tax measure that provides additional funding. Cathy Campbell’s tenure as BFT president (2009-2019) led to some interesting directions based on her values and political strategy combined with the local economic reality and cultural identity of Berkeley.

A shift from the BFT’s traditional “antagonistic” approach under previous leaders, Campbell promised a different approach to striking, “I came with a mindset to really make the adversarial tools in the toolkit the last choice.” This more moderate and tempered approach was coupled with expanding membership participation, which she explained had previously been limited to fewer members. The BFT leadership worked to cultivate educators to be experts in areas like curriculum and instruction as well as compensation:

Often the situation was the district was making a policy decision that affected my members and they wanted to have a phone call with me and be able to say, “Well, we’ve checked with the union.” [...] My goal really was, well let’s get a few of them in the room [to discuss]. Partly what I wanted to do was get my own members to start seeing themselves more as people worthy of being in policy discussions. It’s hard because everyone’s really busy. It’s also hard because you can’t have 50 people at a table.

She was inspired to go into this work because quality teaching was not prioritized or developed enough when she was a teacher in the district. She argued that this connection to the grounded everyday challenges of teaching matters just as much as pay:

I had two big goals. One was to move away from just being what I think of as a service union and go more towards an organizing social justice union. The other big goal I had was to go away from being what I would call a traditional union to one that was more involved in the everyday things of teaching: curriculum, pedagogy, materials, PD. [...] When I came on board, it was a very small percentage of the membership that was actually aware of and involved in the union. It was mostly those people that wanted to fight. And I was very clear when I ran that that was not me, and if you want that, don’t vote for me. I had an opponent

and when I got elected, I stuck to my word and I lowered the temperature on everything. I really built a partnership model with our new superintendent.

The teachers union maintained its influence in Berkeley's civic regime by engaging members around instructional needs and fostering a collaborative relationship with central office as opposed to an antagonistic one. One of the most notable parts of these newfound partnerships is that the teachers union is doing the work typically done by intermediaries in Oakland. For example, with the recent 9th grade redesign, BUSD hired teacher leaders at Berkeley High (TSAs) to do this kind of work instead of outside people with an "outside agenda." Campbell explained that leadership was cultivated within her rank-and-file members to become "experts" in central office policy discussions. Thus, the union replaces the role of intermediary organizations in Oakland as technical experts of equity and efficiency issues.

But other education leaders have voiced their criticism of the power that BFT holds. Mike McBride is an African American pastor at Berkeley The Way ministries who was active in United in Action before moving on with national organizing against police brutality. He expressed frustration that the union and its teachers, many of whom are White, are the power players in the district:

[Cathy Campbell] and the teachers' union have a huge lever in the political organizing of this city, unfortunately. I think it's a terrible misfortune because I don't think that they have demonstrated that they really fight for the success of black and brown kids, families and parents. I think their number one priority is their teachers, as it should be, and I think a majority of the teachers care about students but I don't think that they have caught up with the unique challenges that black and brown families have in these neighborhoods and communities.

This mistrust even extends to other unions in the district. As president of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees (BCCE), representing paraprofessional, clerical, and other office workers throughout the district, Paula Phillips detailed the ways that the two unions have supported and clashed with one another.

When we would organize rallies, the teachers, BFT, they would come out in support of said rallies. They were supportive with members at their sites with the site reps. They would collaborate. But there's still a little, for a lack of better words, friction.

The power dynamics between the unions is largely defined by the fact the BFT negotiates for certain terms of their contract on behalf of the other unions: BCCE, the administrators union, and the classified managers union. This has caused tension as the BFT has not, from Phillips' perspective, bargained in the best interest of her employees:

When it comes to budget cuts, the district and the teachers' unions and everyone else seems to believe that we're disposable. They've got this saying, "We're going to cut as far away from the classrooms as we can." So who is that? Those are classified employees. Cutting away from the classroom means that they're either going to contract out our work, or they're going to put us in a situation where we're working with a limited amount of staff but they still expect the same amount of work to get done. So when they continuously cut, cut, cut, classified employees are overworked. And with no raises, we're underpaid.

Phillips details the power dynamics between unions, with BFT having more control in the bargaining room to set the parameters of what other unions, like the BCCE can fight for. This “disposability” of classified workers revealed that they continue to be left out of the decision making in BUSD, where ‘keeping cuts as far away from the classroom’ as the unintended consequence of hurting already overworked and underpaid low- and mid-level staff.

Table 6 below outlines the differences in the civic and portfolio regimes. A key distinction between the district cases is that Berkeley’s teachers union leads their regime while the Oakland’s sits firmly outside the circle of power players. The Berkeley Federation of Teachers were identified as the most influential actor in the interviews, a privilege that its longtime president Cathy Campbell said takes work to grow and maintain. The Oakland Educators Association is clearly outside of the portfolio regime, but under new leadership in 2018, the organization has held a more active role in resisting market-based policies in OUSD. President Keith Brown and the rest of the leadership team turned from a service union to grassroots organizing in line with the national movement in *social justice unionism* kicked off by the Chicago Teachers Union in 2012 (Todd-Breland, 2018). With a stronger union, BFT replaces the functions of contracted work by using teachers on special assignment to serve as experts on district initiatives, such as the redesign of Berkeley High’s ninth grade. These differences in the major “power players” have led to distinct education politics and governance structures in each city.

TABLE 6. Comparison of Urban Regimes in Oakland and Berkeley

Oakland		Berkeley
Regime Type	Portfolio Regime	Civic Regime
Regime Description	• Values public-private partnerships to spur innovation • Strong competition mindset • External experimentation • Operates under the “reform” paradigm	• Values public education common good • Conflict-averse • Cultivates internal leadership • Operate under the “equity gaps” paradigm
Regime Change	Evolution	Cooptation & Capitulation
Regime Actors	• GO Public Schools • The Oakland REACH • Educate78 • The Oakland Public Education Fund • Energy Convertors • Great School Voices & Great School Choices • The Rogers Family Foundation • California Charter Schools Association • Select OUSD staff, e.g., Superintendents Wilson & Johnson-Trammell National • Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	• Berkeley Federation of Teachers • District Staff • School Board director (all 2020 Vision-endorsed) • Affluent parents • Berkeley Public Schools Fund • Other unions, to a lesser extent, administrative and classified workers

	• Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) • Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation • NewSchools Venture Fund • Teach For America • The City Fund • School Board Partners • The Walton Family Foundation	
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Goals, Values, and Messaging

Education regimes are defined by the distinct values and goals that distinguish them from previous governing coalitions. How ideological stances are espoused through messaging is a critical piece in building power. The portfolio regime in Oakland Unified has focused on bridging charter and district sectors through claims of political agnosticism while Berkeley Unified's regime is based on a strong public-school advocacy that implicitly values Whiteness.

In Oakland, a racially (and to a lesser extent, economically) diverse *portfolio regime* espoused a new discourse of “compromise” between district and charter sectors. These urgent calls for compromise refer to unity, political agnosticism, and remedying past mistakes in charter school advocacy. During its 15-year process of redefining public common sense, the political actors and elites comprising this governing coalition have evolved in their strategy and certain ideals, but their goals around district marketization remain the same. Berkeley's power players rejected “reform” as a framework for their efforts due to its connotation with charter schools and other privatization, preferring to work on “equity gaps” through sustained, local efforts that did not experiment with private governance and resources. A community that identified a strong value in the public good and school integration, many working class parents of color in Berkeley resented its leadership's complacency with racial stratification obscured by the dominant white liberal discourse.

Oakland

When Crisis Compels Compromise: Bridging District and Charter Schools for an “Equitable” Education Portfolio

After 25 years of the charter-versus-district school debate public and private sector, leaders today assert that arguments over school choice obscure what the community should be focusing on: how the school district is serving its neediest families. As one Oakland school district employee explains, “I’m agnostic about the delivery system [...] Public, charter, even private at this point. We’ve struggled for a long time to serve our kids. I personally look at how we serve black kids, especially black boys, because I was one, and it hasn’t always been good” (cited in O’Connor, 2016). The former superintendent of Oakland schools Antwan Wilson made a similar pitch in 2016 about his vision to improve its public schools: “It will take all of us pulling together as One Oakland—more so than we sometimes have. And what I know is this: division is a luxury we simply cannot afford. Let’s come together.” These calls of unity from district leaders marks a change in their approach to charter school reform: one of cooperation rather than competition.

The Oakland case of urban governance illuminates how charter advocates have adapted market concepts to respond to its growing criticism with a contradictory and elusive package of initiatives that comprise the portfolio model. Compromise and unity are upheld as the pillars of the new district governance. Today's portfolio regime is learning from the ghosts of market initiatives'

past, where protests and upheaval around school closures left school communities disillusioned with market strategies. Advocates look towards bringing together both sectors to support “all public schools,” as articulated by Mirella Rangel, director of community organizing at education reform advocacy organization GO Public Schools:

We've tried competition. Look what it's done. Maybe we could say it's gotten things better, but look who's suffering. Whatever it is, we're not doing better by kids. This competition thing isn't helpful. And that is what the portfolio management mostly is about. The idea that 'you have parents who are going to choose the best school and that's what it really is about.' And I'm like, but what happens to the non-choosers? And so we are approaching it, I think, in a different way [...] use the resources for it to better our kids and not be founded in competition, but collaboration.

Thus, in acknowledging the mistakes of the past, particularly around charter reforms, portfolio advocacy today is grounded in their core value of compromise. Advocates talk about bringing together sides with different viewpoints, district and charter, to move forward for the betterment of all of Oakland's children. Conversations, public testimonies, and advocacy literature illustrates that this notion of compromise encompasses four distinct layers: compromise as *unity under crisis*, *political agnosticism*, *remedying past mistakes*, and *equity*.

The compromise aimed to compel stakeholders towards *unity under crisis*. Calls for unity were closely followed by threats of financial instability in the form of another state receivership. This was most expressed by superintendents and central office staff, like Kyla Johnson-Trammell, who urged at a board meeting on the “Community of Schools” resolution, “We’re not going to have a district to argue over - it is that urgent [...] What is the third way? We don’t have the luxury of time” (May 2018). Compromise is closely connected to claims about being *apolitical*, or staying out of politically-charged fighting or disagreement. In this discourse, “agnosticism” towards district or charter governance is highly valued, and “politics” carries a negative connotation of elected officials and infighting. For example, Oakland REACH executive director Lakisha Young and its parent leaders pride themselves in “dealing with the reality of Oakland” by engaging both district and charter sectors for “pro-quality” reform. As opposed to anti-charter groups that only focus on the district, REACH crosses sectors. Young espoused an apolitical approach to education reform:

Sometimes we love the charter schools and other times we don't. Sometimes we love the districts, sometimes we don't. We're pushing for quality, and we're not gonna get into the type of school it is and all that because we can't really afford to. You can't afford to be a Black or Brown family on the other side of the 580 and not be looking at a charter school if you want more options for your child. You get what I'm saying? Because there's only a handful. And there continues, over the last couple of decades, to be a handful of schools that everybody's trying to get their kids into that are really primarily accessible to people who live in those neighborhoods.

According to Young, charter schools are an inevitable part of navigating education for Black and Brown families.

Compromise as *remedying past mistakes* reveals the critiques of the charter school movement from charter parents and teachers themselves. In Oakland, REACH hold member meetings that incorporate parent education around campaigns that distinguish between education *choice* and *access*, a subtle critique of past charter and other choice reforms that have not done enough to be accessible to some working-class communities of color, particularly Black families. Lastly, advocates often

evoke claims about *equity* in discussing compromise. While autonomy was the defining characteristic that would serve to foster creativity without the constraints of bureaucracy, charter advocates and parents today have changed their tune. Current charter school parents and students in Oakland, either aware or unaware of the fight for independence two decades prior, consistently voice their concerns at Oakland board meetings about being left out of enrollment, poor facilities, and other areas that the portfolio model is supposed to address. Hence, the fight for charter autonomy from district provision has been reframed as a form of exclusion from the public sphere.

Brian Rogers of the Rogers Foundation expressed his aspiration of equal treatment for schools in both sectors, despite being a longtime funder of charter school reform:

If a district school is doing better, let's put the money there. But let's make sure that it's an equal and level playing field and let's not prejudice a child because their parents chose to put them in a school that doesn't have necessarily a governance that's directly governed by the school board. There are still good people in that building. There might even be teachers that were in OUSD. There might be people that work in OUSD in that building – they're just trying something new and they're trying to do it flexibly. And their hearts are just the same as the hearts of people trying in Oakland Unified. But, because it's outside of this governance structure, it's labeled as “private,” it's labeled as “no-good,” and they suck resources out of it and try to do whatever it takes to not let it thrive. In the long run, is that what's best for kids? No.

To this local philanthropist, not including charters in district policymaking is a form of “discrimination” and “prejudice.” Contradictory, however, are the claims for unity and demands for select district privileges, like bond funds, yet wanting to be free from government regulation of students, funds, and curriculum. Many charter advocates in Oakland today desire to be included financially, but reject the public oversight that comes with it.

Mike Hutchinson, public education advocate, viewed the portfolio discourse as a distraction from fully resourcing all schools:

They use “quality school development,” they use “redesign,” they'll throw in “equity”... all these buzz words when we all know that what those schools needed more than anything else is to be fully resourced. And if you want to take care of them, then let's make a policy where we're announcing to the community not that ‘those schools are failures and they need to be redone,’ but let's announce to the community, ‘these are the schools we're really going to focus on and take care of. We're now going to give this extra money, so you can all feel safe and comfortable sending your babies there.’

These remarks echo the approach outlined in targeted universalism (powell, 2008; Trujillo et al., 2014, p. 902) that theorizes the importance of policy strategies that acknowledge differences among racialized groups, one that simultaneously meets the universal needs of all stakeholders as well as marginalized communities of color.

Urban regime analysis is particularly useful for understanding the politics of portfolio districts because Oakland's education regime includes intermediary organizations that are significantly more informed and locally engaged, in some ways, than market-based advocates in major cities like Philadelphia and New Orleans. These regime leaders identify as progressives and some are involved in social movement-building efforts. The architects and advocates of the “portfolio idea” seek to distance themselves from previous education reform efforts in their *discursive*

strategies, but as I show in the next section, their *political strategies* continue to spur privatization (Anderson & Donchik, 2016).

Berkeley

Equity Gaps vs. Reform

Berkeley is a place that prides itself in doing things “the Berkeley Way.” Former Superintendent Bill Huyett (2008-2012) noticed these differences coming from working in the Central Valley and Sacramento Area:

Well, Berkeley is very provincial. It's really interesting. It's a dichotomy to me. As progressive and as engaged as it is, it's still a provincial place. They do things the Berkeley way and they're the first to do them oftentimes. They really are proud of being the first to do different things. They're proud here of being the first to integrate. But it is provincial because they start things and then they own them. So making partnerships may be a little bit harder because they don't necessarily tie in with people from outside that well.

Superintendent Huyett's description of the strong sense of Berkeley pride elucidates why there is resistance to “outsiders” making decisions about their city. In stark contrast to Oakland, Berkeley has largely remained outside of the influence of neoliberal policy networks, with a noted absence of TFA teachers. Along with the local political economic conditions that “buffer” Berkeley, as discussed in a Chapter 5, this insular attitude from community stakeholders has often rejected outside money. Others saw this as a problem. Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone, Casal was surprised that Berkeley leaders weren't more motivated to seek out philanthropic funds following state disinvestment:

It would really take some really imaginative leadership and a level of dedication that I was surprised that Berkeley didn't take on like other communities have, and that is going out and raising additional kinds of money. Because a lot of it is just about money. But places like New York with the Harlem Children's Zone, they raise just millions and millions of dollars. Unless you have a parallel effort to be able to do that here and not just depend on resources from the state, you are not going to move ahead because you got to have those resources to give the multiple levels of help that kids and parents need. [...] it should have been a part of the district's effort to reach beyond state funding to try to begin to launch some programs that would begin to make a difference.

Berkeley is not the environment for foundations, particularly venture philanthropists, to make their name. With the absence of outside money, there is more space for direct connection between families, school staff, and district administrators (as detailed in Chapter 6).

As the regime leaders buffer Berkeley from privatization, different values and politics emerge as alternative solutions to inequity and budget cuts. In Berkeley Unified, *equity gaps* is the lens with which leaders approach educational issues as opposed to *reform*. BFT president Cathy Campbell's explanation for why “reform” is not necessarily the approach taken to closing the equity gap reflected a different set of shared values in Berkeley:

When I think about “reform,” I think about the reform agenda defined by billionaires. I think about *A Nation at Risk* and No Child Left Behind, and the narrative that people have

been trying to promulgate which demands that you change structures, in my opinion. That you use the models of the private sector to try to improve your public schools. I think we are fortunate in Berkeley by defining our work as being about equity gaps. We could focus on groups of students. We could focus on instruction. There must have been, and I think there was, an implicit consensus that we were not looking at structures.

Early neoliberal ideologues espoused a roll back of the state, but in reality, they were redefining the state through new public management mechanisms (Tolofari, 2005). Campbell and other educational leaders in Berkeley were not interested in the “innovation” that the education reform network claimed to work towards because they understood that it usually meant privatization. Hence, her work with the union has pushed and collaborated with the district on programmatic or instructional changes as opposed to structural. When leaders toyed with the idea of experimenting with governance over the years, options like K-8 schools and community schools came up, but neither of which have any notion of privatization or of de-unionization.

Pastor McBride stumbled into teaching at Berkeley Tech, B-Tech, the only alternative school in Berkeley Unified. He himself was young and African American, and many of the youth would be shocked to learn that he was a pastor. Part of his ministry was connecting with students that were affiliated with gangs, which meant many tragic experiences where he would literally bury children killed by violence. When he could come visit the alternative school, which he described as chaotic as a scene from *Lean on Me*, he had already built up a lot of trust with the youth there. The B-Tech principal, Victor Diaz, took note and by 2009 they became collaborators on opening a charter school where they could more fully their social justice vision:

B Tech had the highest jump in test scores from one year to the next, I think, in the state. Nobody in the school district celebrated it. They even tried to disparage it and say that we were cheating. And families were like, “We want to have a different experience where we're not labeled as the throwaway school.” Victor always had this desire to do a charter school so I'm sure all along he was seducing all of us — not seducing, but he was kind of pitching, “Hey, it would be better if we had a charter school.”

Pastor McBride became the executive director of Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action (BOCA), part of the larger faith-based PICO Network, a move that was “quite celebrated and appreciated because folks were feeling like we finally have someone with political relationships and organizing and mobilized families.” BOCA's congregation was comprised of B-Tech parents who wanted a smaller school for their child. Despite “tons of pushback” from Campbell and the teachers' union, who he described as “very anti-charter,” then-Superintendent Huyett held a more neutral position and the board, thanks to Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, a “2020 Vision”-endorsed candidate, they had enough votes to pass approve charter. He recalled, “it proved to be our first big victory around radically shifting the resource and the system of the Berkeley public schools around a charter school.”

However, unlike in other cities, charter schools were a mere *moment* as opposed to a *movement* in Berkeley. REALM, Berkeley Unified's first²⁰ charter school,²¹ open its doors in 2011 and ran for eight years before being closed in 2019. They were respected for their social justice tech focus and project-based learning program but faced many challenges with financial management. Pastor McBride mused, “The devil you know is worse than the devil don't know. We had great facilities but an inadequate pedagogical program. Now we have a great pedagogical program but challenging

²⁰ Others were located in BUSD but overseen by other providers.

facilities.” Eventually their charter was revoked when they moved the school to a building outside of the county, and they tried to merge with COMPASS, a CMO based in Southern California with a poor reputation. He explained:

I think the reason why the charter school movement didn't take off in Berkeley was because there was not the political capital to make that happen outside of myself and our coalition. United in Action was not a big proponent or driver of charter schools. [BFT president] Cathy Campbell, she was a part of United in Action which created a little bit of tension. And I always had a critique of, "Why is this white woman a part of our coalition and the teachers and the teachers' union are the ones who are driving all of our suspensions?" My approach was very hard for folks. I don't mind that she sits at the table, but she shouldn't be dictating how... We all Black and Brown people, there's 10 of us in here and there's one white woman and she can veto everything we're talking about?

McBride's description indicates that there was tension with the union president, a White woman, who held opposing viewpoints about the role of charter schools in educational equity. The lack of support, including from the parents of color in UIA who also did not support charter schools, along with the hard work and “personal political capital” it took to keep REALM running meant that Berkeley would only have one charter school in the district.

According to Campbell, concerns about re-segregation were central to charter school debates in Berkeley as the first district to voluntarily desegregate:

There was a lot of willingness to consider REALM [charter school]. But in general, I think people felt that if you were to really look at neighborhood schools, or even a lot of magnet schools, you were going to be resegregating. I think that was just a given in the conversation and a given that people didn't want to do that.

BUSD was sued multiple times for its integration plan, forcing them to change their metrics to other proxies for race. All eyes were on the district as it continued to defend the plan, with significant support from the community. These events coincided with fight to establish REALM, and tainted some support for the charter school, although it was ultimately passed with Superintendent Huyett's support. Cathy explained that these integration ideals kept charter school growth at bay, “You've just defended [integration]. You think it's the right thing. You're not really going to go into ideas that are going to undo this thing you've just defended.” However, some parents like Santiago Casal disillusioned with desegregation efforts. From his perspective, as a Latino parent in BUSD and founder of United in Action, many Berkeleyans respond to racial inequity by positing that it was a problem that had been taken care of long ago in their city. He motioned up high as if he were putting away a box, “They say, ‘we put that [problem] on the shelf.’” He grasped the air, “But this conversation of desegregation means bringing back the topic of race and racism that they thought was put away.” He was forthright about his cautious support of the benefits of segregation for students of color, but acknowledged it was a “dirty word” in Berkeley, among people of all races.

How White Liberalism Obscures Inequality

In Berkeley, some parents pointed to the lack of a “critical mass” of students of color, whether in a single program or school, as a key barrier in mobilizing change. This goes against the more dominant idea that has defined the character of its city and district: that diversity is valued through integration. Some stakeholders were proud of this, while others were frustrated that it obscured, or even justified, the racism in their community and in the daily experiences of their

students of color, namely Black students. It has stymied more dire problems that come with segregated school, namely unequal resources and lack of social capital among disenfranchised families to pressure leaders. Yet it has made it more difficult for working class parents of color to mobilize across schools, some argue.

Pablo Paredes is a Berkeley parent who has been very politically active in immigration and other social issues in the Bay Area. He described the racialized and classed power dynamics in the day-to-day schooling experiences amongst parents at Sylvia Mendez, a newly redesigned dual language elementary school, as an alliance between “a very privileged community and migrant families” was laden with “hidden problems” from the start:

Everything was oriented in the direction of the powerful families. They wanted organic gardening, we did organic gardening. Not that brown kids don't like organic gardening, but there were a lot of things that we had on our list of things that were necessary. When funding questions came up, for tutors for example, they were like, "No, no, no, no, the garden program is so important," [and] this big elaborate conversation about why it's important. But it isn't that we don't understand that — we have different priorities. Let's be real. But they had the power, so they always got it.

He described the day-to-day “battles” that privileged parents would consistently win, from community gardens to bilingual staffing:

We thought, for example, that a consolidated two-way immersion school should stretch to afterschool and to school staffing. So the migrant families were like, "We need somebody bilingual at the front door, and we need bilingual people in the staff after school." That was only a concern for the migrant families. A lot of the white folks who just wanted their kids to become bilingual were just cool with that happening during the day, but they would make decisions about the rest of the afternoon based on their interests and not based on that. [...] So I don't know how many parents left the school at some point because they were just so tired of showing up and not even being able to communicate.

For privileged White parents, bilingualism was a marketable skill in a globalized economy. For Mexican and Central American migrant families, bilingualism was as much a vehicle for democratic representation as it was necessary for their children's academic success.

Rebecca Cheung, former BUSD educator, principal, and administrator, ticked off examples of White normative values that permeated throughout the district:

You know that the kids at B Tech get a Berkeley High diploma? There's a silent commodification [...] of what that degree means, and how they will allow kids in and out of their school as a form of power. “As long as you go to school over here, we'll give you what you want,” which is a degree. [...] Somehow in the narrative, the white normative values that are so dominant, include the value of a BHS diploma. That is more important than doing well and thriving at the location.

Whereas Oakland is known for its fiery board meetings, with fights between board members and community members causing meetings to shut down early, the Berkeley's education scene in recent years has been characterized by some stakeholders as filled with complacency and not enough urgency around racial justice issues. The power players are not angry enough, according to David

Kakishiba, former OUSD school board member (2003-2014) who lived and worked in Berkeley throughout the 1980s:

[R]egardless of all the rhetoric from anybody you would interview or talk to, Berkeley just didn't have the level of anger and tragedy and sense of urgency to say, "Fuck you. We're going to do something way different." They just didn't really have that in Berkeley. And the relationship between formal government and the so-called people or the so-called activists, that's a lot closer relationship. Whereas, you can be the mayor [of Oakland] walking down the streets, "get outta here, big deal." But that's less the case in Berkeley. They might be complaining about, "I do not want you to build another house next to my house, because it blocks my view," but there's just a lot of anger in Oakland that I think helped to fuel opportunities, including market opportunities.

The anger from residents about their poor schooling conditions, a justified response following decades of budget cuts, spurred philanthropists to turn their attention to Oakland and swoop in to fill the financial void while providing market-oriented solutions.

However, Cheung disagreed with Director Kakishiba's assessment of Berkeley, arguing that there has, in fact, been a deep anger that is stifled by respectability politics:

There is anger, I would say. [...] One of the hardest parts about working in Berkeley is the deep acceptance of White normative values, even by many people of color, who work in the system or whose kids are in the system. I think that is a big problem, in terms of urgency for change. It's shocking for people who haven't been in Berkeley to go there and experience it.

The acceptance of White normative values by people of color, per Cheung's view, has silenced the confrontational voices in education politics. As an Asian-American administrator in BUSD, she learned these lessons on respectability in her time on the 2020 Vision's founding team. She explained how the project was "an amazing feat" given some of the resistance to racial inequity as a framework:

I remember all these discussions where people refused to accept structural racism. [...] We looked at health inequity, morbidity rates, educational performance, and poverty, and guess what? All the lines line up. That's called structural racism, in case you didn't know... all the way down to the way kids are disciplined, and the normative expectations in schools around what is good. People would not accept that.

There were administrators and political leaders, many of whom, who would go through the emotions of symbolically supporting the city's racial justice work, or even resistant to it. And angry people of color, especially if they were Black, would be dismissed for being implicitly out of line with "White normative values":

Parents, angry people were treated a certain way inside the white normative values because, as we know, white normative values include not getting angry. Anger is treated in such a way that those people are marginalized. If you're a person of color who wants to be on the school board, do you think that it's in your best interest to get angry and to be divisive in that situation? You're not going to get anywhere. You're never going to get elected. Where in Oakland — I live in Oakland — there are communities of many of us who are like, "We will

pick the angriest person, because actually, maybe that person is going to amplify our voice,” where that really isn't the value [in Berkeley]. It gets marginalized.

Cheung's quote provides a comparative analysis as someone who has worked in both districts and lives in Oakland, where the politics of contestation is rooted in fact that many education officials and activists value the right to disagree and push back. This also explains why Oakland's portfolio regime is particularly focused on “compromise” amid so much conflict. Director Karen Hemphill's speech following her retirement from the Berkeley school board in 2018 echoed this theme of complacency around the achievement gap. Calmly but passionately, she called out the deeply entrenched racism towards Black students and their families by BUSD staff:

As an active parent of Black sons for ten years before being elected to the board, and with 12 years of being on the board, I am convinced that the single most important factor in our continuing academic disparities is the implicit bias of too many of our classroom teachers, resource teachers, administrators, and any third-party providers... And for anyone listening who is rolling their eyes at this statement, you are part of the problem. [Audience laughs and claps] Low skills and low ability are not the same.

Director Hemphill acknowledged the many structural factors, like housing scarcity, affecting Black students' academic achievement, but she doubled down on the district's role and pointed to other districts that face the same issues yet have more success. Moved by the speech, Cheung asked rhetorically: “Why did she have to say it at the end of her career? Because she wouldn't have gotten anywhere if she said it earlier.”

Mary Friedman, founder and board member of the Berkeley Public Schools Fund, echoed these sentiments. She found the board “too collaborative” in recent years:

I almost don't think there are enough opposing voices. A school board is where a discussion about school reform issues would take place. I think they're very, very respectful of one another and I don't see dissension. [...] It's a little boring. I mean, even if somebody said, ‘you know, I've been reading these articles on this issue, have we thought about that? Could we think about this?’ It doesn't feel visionary. And so, perhaps, because of all the great things we've done, nothing is really rearing its head in such a way.

The quality and relatively equitable education in Berkeley, which many residents have worked and pushed for generations to get to, may be causing civic regime leaders to be comfortable with where they are rather than visionary. Julie Sinai, recently elected Berkeley School Board member, also hoped to see more deliberation around upcoming budget cuts and the LCAP community engagement goals. She acknowledged the lack of urgency among some of her colleagues:

The board members, they're all wonderful people, they're my friends, I like them very much, but I don't see an outrage. I don't see an urgency. I feel like I'm one of the community people like “where's the urgency?” I mean, some people on the board absolutely express that, but it doesn't seem like we're holding our administration accountable.

According to Director Sinai, holding the administration accountable is not the attitude among a generally agreeable board. This also relates to the relationship between the school board and the superintendent, which the OUSD school board has also struggled with its wielding their own power as elected officials.

The political economic conditions under austerity have made market-based policies inevitable across the nation's urban schools, similarly appealing to a small minority of the Berkeley community. They expressed a desire for foundation funding, non-profit advocacy, and even charter schools to tap into the power of racial justice, a strategy as old as neoliberalism itself (Spence, 2012). However, charter schools were a moment, not a movement, unlike in the neighboring districts of Oakland and Richmond. Charters never blossomed in Berkeley because of the strong value in public education among its residents, across racial lines. Furthermore, the displacement of working-class communities of color following the Great Recession and gentrification meant there was a shrinking base who would even attend, let alone fight for, these schools. Still, it is important to note that even in a public governance model, which is not often studied in education research, these strong public values are challenged by a *politics of complacency* around governance reform by locating the district as a challenge to social change.

Strategy

Building on the discussion of *discursive strategies*, this section compares the *political strategies* of each regime (Anderson & Donchik, 2016). Oakland's portfolio regime utilized an inside-outside strategy to get their policy passed by the school board, beginning with a campaign through GO Public Schools. Many charter advocates have worked more closely with an increasingly portfolio-friendly central office by rubber stamping policies despite their recalcitrance with government. The shift towards more market-friendly district and school board leaders is because various venture philanthropists have funneled more funds into local campaigns, professional development, and "design labs." Furthermore, GO directors created the Oakland REACH as one strategy to remedy past market-oriented efforts through targeted outreach to Black families and engaging more "local" leadership, with mixed success. Berkeley's civic regime instead focused on incremental changes that engaged a highly vocal constituency. Changes like creating a universal ninth grade or teacher of color recruitment were less drastic, but arguably more sustainable, and thus made more inroads around equity gaps. However, local efforts fell short of any significant changes to redefining the district's goals, with civic groups mainly working with or within Berkeley Unified.

Oakland

Venture Philanthropy in Portfolio Districts: Political Campaigns and Design Labs

Venture philanthropists continue to fund and influence market-oriented education reforms as they did with charter schools, but now they are directly and indirectly involved at the district level. Superintendents and other district leaders are increasingly TFA alumni who have worked in charter school advocacy and development, bringing with them the edu-preneur network of funders. Foundations like Broad, Gates, Walton, and Rogers have supported portfolio districts efforts by channeling funding through intermediaries like Educate78's design lab, which essentially function as a local think tank. They also play a key role in financing and developing school board candidates as well as educational leaders that are "boundary spanners," that is, they weave between district and charter sectors.

Led by GO Public Schools, the 1Oakland campaign was an attempt to drum up community demand for their vision of a portfolio district. As discussed in the previous chapter, "portfolio district" is an ambiguous concept; however, many advocates through GO and other organizations generally agree that OUSD is a portfolio district, albeit a poorly functioning one. Asserting a clear board policy would, in their eyes, be a positive step towards realizing the potential of these partnerships. With support from the well-resourced and well-coordinated regime, the staff at GO ran a strong campaign that included rallying former OUSD students to speak at the board meetings,

mostly Latinx charter school alumni, and a color-coordinated press kit. Drawing on unity language and city pride, their press release read, “We are calling on Oakland’s educators and community leaders to focus on reimagining and building a citywide system of schools. We are asking leaders to take unprecedented responsibility to meet the needs of all students. All means all” (August 24, 2018). Their campaign website outlined a strategy for moving “beyond battle ground to common ground on behalf of our students” through three core areas of recommendation:

- 1. Oakland’s elected school board and charter school boards ensure excellence and equity across all public schools;*
- 2. All public schools contribute equitably to providing Oakland’s most underserved students an excellent education; and*
- 3. All public schools have equitable access to public resources.*

There was also a petition started in 2018 by major players in the education regime, which included local foundations (Brian Stanley, the Oakland Public Ed Fund; Rogers Family Foundation), advocacy organizations (Charles Cole, Energy Convertors; David Castillo, Oakland Charters; NAACP, Oakland); education intermediaries and non-profits (Elisa Salas, College Track; Kelly Knoche, The Teaching Well), charter management organizations (Leo Fuchs, Education for Change, Louise Waters Bay, Leadership Public Schools; Luis Rodriguez, North Oakland Community Charter School) along with over 900 signatories, some of whom worked in district and charter schools. Their petition states that they arrived at these core areas based on “35 research meetings, 300 one-to-one meetings, reflection and analysis of our lived experiences and perspectives, and feedback received from more than 100 Oaklanders” (1Oakland, 2018, para. 2).

Ultimately, their hard work, and donations, paid off. In June 2018, the board passed in a 4-2 vote the “Community of Schools” Policy (BP 6006) in which the OUSD board stated that:

It is the Board’s categorical expectation that all education providers operating or desiring to operate school programs in Oakland – district or charter – as well as families, staff, community members and labor unions, will accept shared responsibility for the sustainability of our school system and embrace the idea that we: (i) do not operate in silos, (ii) are interdependent in our efforts to serve all students and families; and (iii) need to act with consideration of the larger community of schools.

The board policy and statement echoed the key concepts of the 1Oakland campaign, particularly the notion of “shared responsibility” to break the culture of working “in silos.” The board policy also directed Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell to “develop a citywide plan that promotes the long-term sustainability of publicly-funded schools across Oakland that represent quality and equitable educational options.” The vote was divided between board members whose election campaigns were endorsed by GO and those who were not. GO worked hard to demonstrate that this was an “independent” and “grassroots” campaign, yet the staff had been in coordination with many members of the school board and even organized their visit to Boston for a training on portfolio management (Barnum, 2018). The 1Oakland campaign website also referenced the Baltimore City Public Schools as a resource for building a portfolio of public schools (BCPS, 2018). The portfolio idea is far from a local, grassroots initiative.

The 1Oakland campaign was successful in that the “Community of Schools” policy was ultimately passed, but there was a lot of pushback and questions about whether this even had teeth (see p. xx). It also spurred internal conflict among GO Public Schools’ staff and board about what

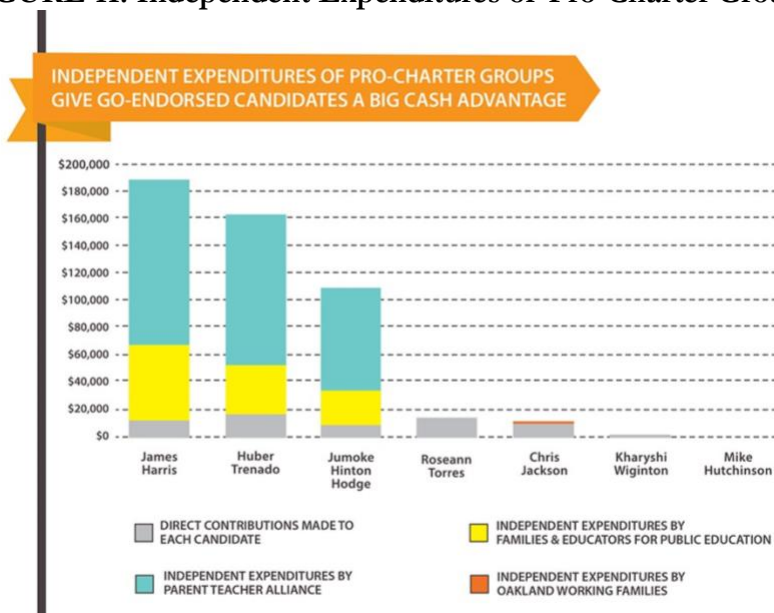
direction to take moving forward. Its “compromise approach” had begun to alienate a few longtime charter allies. Mirella Rangel expressed concern when Broad-trained Superintendent Antwan Wilson arrived in Oakland in 2015:

I was definitely the person in GO who was like, ‘I agree with what he wants to do. I don't think I agree with how he wants to do it.’ Internally, in GO there was tension around that. So there were people on staff who were like, “we're your friend.” And there were people like me, who are like, “Oh, my God, we need to call him out.” There was an email that we wrote and were going to publish, and we never published it because there was so much strife in the organization about “well, he'll be really upset with us.” And I felt, “but he's fucking it up!” So I think that as a team right now, we are a lot more clear. We have conversations and get aligned about that.

While Rangel distanced herself from Superintendent Wilson, GO was instrumental in supporting his work, including the portfolio initiative. She admitted that her organization had not lived up to their promise in holding both district and charter schools accountable, as the portfolio strategy is supposed to do in theory, and that they would make more of an effort in pressuring charter networks. However, their political and financial influence on GO will likely continue to quiet any significant critiques of charter schools in Oakland.

GO has been pivotal in radically altering the electoral landscape in Oakland since they launched GO Public Schools Advocates, a 501(c)4 in 2012. Over the last four electoral cycles, following the Supreme Court ruling *Citizens United* decision in 2010, GO's “Families and Educators for Public Education” super-PAC has raised more than one million dollars from major donors including the California Charter School Association Advocates (“CCSAA”), former mayor NYC mayor and presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg, venture capitalist Arthur Rock, and the Rogers family (see Figure 11). In 2014, the *East Bay Express* reported that “two independent-expenditure committees with ties to charter school groups have spent nearly half-a-million dollars on three Oakland school-board candidates: James Harris, Huber Trenado, and Jumoke Hinton Hodge” (BondGraham, 2016, para. 1).

FIGURE 11. Independent Expenditures of Pro-Charter Groups in OUSD Election, 2016



School Board Director Rosie Torres is a rare example of shifting allegiances and alliances. Originally endorsed by GO in 2012 and then re-elected without their endorsement in 2016, she instead earned the teachers union's endorsement as she shifted her position and voting record on a number of issues, becoming increasingly critical of charter schools. She recalled the early days of her GO Public Schools endorsement when she was thrust into a network of market-based reformers that extended beyond Oakland and even California:

GO Public Schools would have me get on the call with some congressman in Colorado and he's going to talk to me about my election and how important it is. And then this congressman would talk to me about how important it is for people to have choice, and this and that. And I was like, "What does that mean, 'choice'? Like picking from one school to another within Oakland Unified?" No, it turned out it meant charters. [...] Why am I talking to a congressman I didn't know? I went to this alternate universe.

Admittedly naïve about school choice, Director Torres learned on the campaign trail about the mixed reaction from families about their experience in charter schools, and that many had children in both charter and district systems. Learning on the job taught her that the issues were much more complex, and she soon vocalized her dissent with the education reform movement, to the dismay of the funders that buoyed her first campaign. At a "Follow the Money!" hosted by Classroom Struggle in February 2016, the organizing caucus of OEA, Director Torres spoke to the crowd of agitated parents, educators, and activists protesting the common enrollment initiative proposed by the district. She held a megaphone in one hand and her other hand on her chest as she voiced her concerns with the growing privatization under Superintendent Wilson's administration:

I definitely am concerned as a school board member that a lot of unusual conduct is happening, and that the board is actually not doing business publicly about who is working in our schools and consultants working in our district. My daughter is in the public schools, so I'm concerned as a parent, not just as a school board member, about whether or not we will still have public schools in the future if this trend continues. Because if this is not the topic of the day in 20-30 years after the takeover, then corporations can just walk away. And that's the nightmare that keeps me up — what would happen if this was a complete charter district and one day they decide to go into another arena? We'll be left with empty buildings, no teachers, no education for our students who can't afford to go to private schools [or] move to another city that has public education. It's definitely worrisome to me why things are happening in the way that they are with all of this new leadership in Oakland that isn't from Oakland. I don't think they really know how to serve us.

In this impromptu speech about the unregulated influence of the charter industry, Director Torres made clear that the OUSD school board was not holding the district accountable about its spending on contracts, nor were they being transparent with the constituents that elected them. Mike Hutchinson, Oakland community member and education activist, lamented that billionaires like the Rogers claimed that privatization was a part of the Rogers Foundation's agenda for a long time prior to the downfall of the small school movement:

[Rogers] was the executive director of GO. And because Rogers himself couldn't get elected to the school board, they have used their money to basically buy off all of these school board members and splash around their money. There has been a political agenda to the school board since then. And so, I would actually argue that we really never got back local

control. Control just went from the state to this small group of billionaires who fund the school board members' elections.

On GO Public Schools Advocates 501c(4) and Families and Educators for Public Schools excessive funding in OUSD school board races, Rangel made clear her discomfort, "It's not even my call... Yeah, it doesn't align fully with my values. There are people in GO who are like, 'I'm fine with the money.' And I would love for it not to be that way. It doesn't feel right."

Derrick Johnson from the NewSchools Venture Fund (NSVF) identified Educate78 and GO Public Schools as their partners in Oakland. To be precise, Educate78 was funded by Gloria Lee, who came from NSVF. NSVF is not an incubator, instead they provide support for local incubators, such as Educate78's design lab. Derrick explained how his network venture capitalists are "re-imagining learning networks":

As a national organization, our goal is not to be everything to everyone. In cases where teams are coming out of those incubators, we want to support all of them who meet our criteria, or the best teams. For those that we find outside of that who need supports like that, we want to connect them to them. [...] And then we bring together around practice. The difference is incubators are generally local. You only know about the innovation local to you. You know about policy and things in your specific context. But what happens when you bring together 25 schools in one cohort that are in 18 different states and 23 different cities? Having them all come together to share their innovations is particularly powerful as well, because otherwise, it's really hard and costs a lot of money to be able to get around to all of those states and get all of their perspectives.

Johnson's excitement was palpable as it was clear how powerful these networks were in redefining public education systems. They also were sophisticated in attending to both local needs and the priorities of funders. The more GO worked to deepen its local engagement in attempt to build a more authentic brand, the more it was nationalizing its network with edu-preneur intermediaries and wealthy donors. The portfolio regime was critical to sub-hegemonic strategies; that is, strategies that appeal to the local, while still in line with the larger hegemonic project of neoliberalism (Sum, 2004). These policy actors made the market appeal to Oaklanders by translating the portfolio idea to the grassroots.

The Racial Politics of Parent Advocacy

Portfolio for Whom?

Wednesday, June 6, 2018. 6:30pm.

Two police officers sit in the front of the gym inside La Escuelita Elementary School, which twice a month is converted into the meeting space for the OUSD board. There is a noticeably smaller crowd (and smaller police presence), perhaps due to the Warriors' Game 3 in the NBA Finals. Inside, a sea of colorful shirts that indicate organizational affiliation: Oakland Education Association in lime green, Aspire charter school network in purple, and a new, unknown group in yellow. Over 100 African American (and some Latinx) parents and guardians of Oakland students address the school board wearing golden yellow t-shirts with "REACH" on the front and on the back: "It is our mission to make the powerless parent powerful." There is a rough correlation between t-shirt color and race: REACH is majority Black, OEA is majority White, and Aspire is majority Latinx.

During public comment on the charter renewal of Aspire ERES Academy, a charter school, one parent echoing Black Lives Matter discourse says, “My children matter. School choice matters.” A tall white woman in line responded enthusiastically with finger snaps. Another person cites Martin Luther King Jr.’s “an injustice to anyone anywhere is an injustice to everyone everywhere.” A woman quotes a statement that Board President James Harris made five years ago, “When are we going to get it through our heads that we ‘work for the same team?’”

Making the connection between migration narratives and the great lengths immigrant families will go to take their children to a charter school, one Aspire teacher says, “A mile is nothing for our families. Our families have travelled miles to arrive to this country. One mile will not stop our determined families. *OUSD is a district of choice.*” One mile is the difference between the current location of Aspire ERES Academy and their new school.

A Latino male teacher lists the inadequate facilities his charter school faces. A woman on the right side of the audience shouts, “Go to your corporate board! Or go to a public school!”

“We are a public school!” snaps another woman from across the aisle.

While the Oakland REACH brings out as many as 100 parents to any given board meeting around issues of charter school regulation and district collaboration, this kind of parent engagement barely scratches the surface of what its leadership envisions as parent empowerment in education advocacy. Its executive director, Lakisha Young, explained, “It’s one thing to show up at a board meeting, it’s one way to build your knowledge, but how do you take all that and actually say, ‘Now this parent is sitting across from the superintendent and other senior leaders in the district talking about the issues and solving them?’” She pointed out that her organization’s diverse, but “primarily Black-led parent movement” is rare to find in the city’s saturated advocacy landscape, one that some interview participants have pointed to better serving Latinx families.

Longtime non-profit CEO Olis Simmons echoed a similar sentiment. Despite opening two charter schools in deep east Oakland, which have since closed due to under-enrollment and mismanagement, she has never considered herself fully accepted by the charter community as a Black woman — nor did she care to be. A charismatic and controversial figure in Oakland who was once described as the “kind of person who talks in deep poetic sermons rather than just sentences” (Dirks, 2018), she had grown impatient with the White leaders of the education reform movement expecting her and other Black youth to “pretend to be somebody else,” which is why she ran her schools “outside of the traditional charter space.” She recalled one incident after an OUSD board meeting when she snapped back at a heckler in the audience, for which she was chastised by fellow charter supporters:

So I go to the meeting following this, and the school reform people say, “well, no one among us is willing to act ‘crazy,’” that was the word the White man used. And I say, “the truth is that there’s a lack of cultural competency in this group, and our failure to be inclusive has led us to a place where we don’t know how to move in the community that we’re in, and so I’m not gonna be painted the angry Black woman because you’re culturally incompetent.” I sat next to a big black guy and he said, “well, it didn’t feel safe to me in the meeting.” I’m saying, who are you guys? We’ve basically abandoned our cultural heritage and our reality in order to try to get along with a group of people who are never gonna accept us, that don’t want us there.

The racial tensions in charter school coalitions illuminate the fragile relations between stakeholders, and Oakland is no exception. Simmons had created a charter school specifically to serve Black and Samoan communities, two of which she said were not being served at the rate that Latinx families were. From her perspective, the White charter leaders preferred immigrant parents because they were “easy to deal with.” Coming from New York where poor people of different ethnic backgrounds were more connected, it shocked her to come to Oakland “where people saw each other as the enemy, although they were living in the same institutional racialized spaces. [...] The way that it’s playing out in Oakland, I think, doesn’t bode well for the public institutions, or over the long haul, the charters.” She ticked off many problems with the market-oriented education reform movement:

So it’s not a welcoming space, it’s not a culturally competent space, it’s not an inclusive space, it’s not a space that’s open to the depth of dialogue that’s necessary to really hash out the nuts and bolts of what you have to do to serve communities and children of color in a way that they deserve to be served, in a way that honors who they are, and honors their heritage, and their people, and their legacy, and their very being. But I don’t need them to use the legal vehicle of a charter. So they can kiss my ass. So that’s how I feel about the school reform movement.

For Simmons, she tried to parse out the aspects of charter school reform that would serve her community, while discarding the rest; namely, the White fragility of the movement’s leaders (DiAngelo, 2011). However, her charter school eventually closed.

This new iteration of the market regime has tried different strategies to remedy past efforts, including targeted outreach to Black families, hiring “local,” and political education geared towards parents and guardians. This has come with mixed success. Lakisha Young from the Oakland REACH helped OUSD board president James Harris, an African American man who received major contributions from the charter industry, with the “community of school” portfolio policy when he called on her for more community support in the face of strong backlash. She explained:

We were not focused on [the portfolio policy], but because of our relationship with James, we knew that it was there. And so we got a chance to read it and essentially our initial conversations were around, “Do you think this is gonna pass?” I think there was some confidence — there may have been some overconfidence that it was going to pass. There was a lot of tension in there. It took what, ten weeks? As we started to get to the last several weeks of it, we spoke out publicly in support of it on June 6th, and then on June 27th because although we don’t give a shit about a policy, we need action. The work we do is about making change. Policies don’t make change. They can set up the groundwork for that, but right now as we speak, I’m just telling you, we’ve already created our solution as a response to this Community of Schools policy and a response to what needs to happen to the Blueprint. We’re not waiting on the district to decide. The spirit of it is on point, but I wake up every morning knowing that folks on our team graduated from school and got a real poor education. Some couldn’t read. This is life or death and pretty urgent for our families.

Her comments revealed a cynicism around board policy, where she viewed public deliberation around transparency was a challenge to the equity work that her organization was carrying out. Around one hundred parents showed up to these board meetings under Young’s direction. She explained that they stayed in the background until “it looked like it needed some parent voice

around it.” She prided herself in the impact of parent mobilization at the board meeting, “I would have to say that I believe that our support of it helped in the very end.” In attending to the needs of Black families, Young and others’ involvement with Oakland REACH is attempting to do the corrective work of strengthening market hegemony by way of education reforms like the portfolio strategy. Young is also paid staff at GO and who took the Oakland REACH parents to trainings in Memphis with the Memphis Lift, another organization connected to TFA. The portfolio regime’s *discursive* strategy involves changing their rhetoric with a more educated and nuanced racial justice lens, and yet their *political* strategy is to continue to work with the same network of venture philanthropies and intermediaries (Anderson & Donchik, 2016).

Berkeley

United in Action: Institutionalization or Cooptation?

The rise, fall, and, to some extent, cooptation, of UIA illuminates the conflicting ideologies and strategies about governance, multiracial organizing, and how to leverage Berkeley’s *civic capacity* (Stone, 2016). The organization put a lot of weight onto an electoral strategy, emphasizing a politics of representation by pushing for board members of color. This was a more difficult task in Berkeley, where they hold at-large board elections. Back in 2003, UIA considered pushing for representative elections, but decided against it. Over the course of four years, the coalition eventually elected two board members, Beatriz Leyva-Cutler and Karen Hemphill. Casal captured this moment of having a second 2020 Vision-endorsed member in the following excerpt from his poem:

Last night was a special night, one to savor ...
the crowning of our victory,
the seating of our new Board Director,
nuestra hermana,
Beatriz Leyva-Cutler....

The room was full of us there waiting,
milling about, greeting and embracing one another
in the glow of our maturing collective connection....

And then she entered,
Beatriz, the hub of our gathering,
we exploded in cheers, clapping,
gritos de “Si Se Puede”,
smiles across our entire faces,
hearts full,
tears flowing....

The mandate and the message apparent,
she took her seat next to our,
now not so alone warrior, Karen....

His poem is an expression of the coalition’s beliefs and values, and what they hoped would be taken on by the school board: solidarity as centered by community members of color. The election of Chicana Beatriz Leyva-Cutler was received as a “crowning” of one of their own sisters (“hermanas”), who would go on to join Karen Hemphill, the only African American and 2020 Vision-endorsed director on the board. In comparison to Oakland politics in the mid-2000s, which

was defined by losing complete democratic control of its school board to a state administrator, education reform in Berkeley was focused on representation politics as the political strategy to racial justice for its students and schools.

Early on in the 2020 Vision, once Bill Huyett became superintendent in 2008, UIA organizers' "demands" turned into "collaborative agreements" with Berkeley Unified. While sometimes things could get heated over difference of opinions, UIA founder Casal said that they were simply "a leadership team with common goals." The organization eventually reached a crossroads about whether to become a non-profit or end their work following the codification of some key goals:

Some of the militancy, urgency, and clarity that we started out with began to erode a bit and people started going in different directions. I think that was the beginning of compromise. To me, I think people all have good intentions. I think everybody is dedicated, but the reality of all the other stuff you have to deal with begins to just close in on you and you start having to deal with this and this and this. And that priority that you started out with gets jeopardized and diminished. Unless you can hold on to the vision and not get diverted by other important things, then this here begins to suffer. I think that's ultimately what happened.

Seeing that the racial justice work of the UIA was losing priority for the district staff and school board, he has since regretted that the volunteer-run UIA did not become a non-profit. There also were ideological tensions that he wished they could have had more time and resources to work out. "There's never a shortage of ideas for social change in a place like Berkeley," he smiled, knowingly, "The problem is figuring out how to do it."

When UIA ended, it was because its members felt that their main goal was accomplished, or at least there were policies set in place to move forward their vision. They instead opted to institutionalize their efforts through different government and public entities. The Berkeley Alliance had been a longstanding committee with paid staff that, according to Casal, "used to just mediate the problems between the university and the city." But then it was injected with new energy with the 2020 Vision. This is essentially "collective action approach," strategies that across sectors and institutions. But there were issues with the Alliance, as Casal wrote in a reflection in 2012, "External struggles with the City of Berkeley, BUSD, and Berkeley Alliance that were denying us a full seat at the table and conscious patterns of working together mitigated against full inclusion." The grassroots initiative was starting to take on a life of its own within many institutions, while parent leaders pushed from some of the decisions.

The evolution of this community-led group, and the equity initiative itself, provides insight into the challenges to institutionalization. The group's decision to not become a non-profit and trust that their vision would be carried out by civic and government leaders demonstrated a significant trust in public institutions and coordination amongst these actors. Ultimately, the absence of a coordinated coalition of civic groups to hold the institutions accountable, as the Berkeley Alliance intended to be, halted the momentum and implementation of the 2020 Vision, which was eventually watered down.

The 2020 Vision can be credited for establishing an equity lens to Berkeley's education landscape. As board member Ty Alper explained:

My understanding was that at the time it was created, it was the school board that had to be dragged into agreeing to it. And that the city was saying that "you need to put equity in your focus." [...] Now it's like, all five board members, and the district staff, and most of our

administrators, have equity as their number one priority. I don't think that was the case before the 2020 Vision. You also have to know what the right way to spend your money is, and the way to address implicit bias, like Karen was talking about at the board meeting. But that is a pretty big cultural shift, I think, that it can probably take credit for.

Interestingly, it was staff City of Berkeley and councilmembers put political pressure on the school district to get on board with their citywide equity initiative. There were also many debates on whether its within the district's power to close the achievement gap:

But there's also a point to the partnership that it created, because I think it's a recognition that the school district can't do it all alone. I was actually asking [fellow board directors] Julie and Ka'Dijah their thoughts about this. I don't think they appreciated the question, actually. But there's some limit to what the school district can do, whatever you think it is, you could think it's like, the school district can account for 90% of the achievement gap, or 30%, or 50%, but it's not 100%. And so, it was a recognition, I think, that we've got to do early childhood stuff, we've got to do something in the community during after school and then summer school. We've got to address health inequities. Housing security is a big part of it. Food security. It really does kind of take a village, and the whole point of that was to pull the village together. And I just think bureaucratically that's really hard to do.

In more recent years some parents, like Pablo Paredes, wanted to build a critical mass of students of color, which in many ways ran counter to the purpose of desegregated schools. Pablo described “real and painful” tensions between Black and Brown communities at his dual-language immersion school. The change in the school's focus and name, in honor of the Latina civil rights icon Sylvia Mendez²¹, came as “migrant families were trying to consolidate power” that had previously been fractured with their students spread out among different, integrated schools. But even within the new dual language school, the power struggles continued. From his perspective, by not defending Black parents who were pushed out of the school's development (cite demographics), working class migrant families were left with few allies to the power imbalance of the affluent White and Latinx parents. He explained:

One of the very legitimate concerns that black families had is black families are going to get pushed out of this school. Because when it becomes a two-way immersion school, unless you intentionally do something to protect black families, it's going to become migrant families and white families. That's exactly what happened. And Brown families didn't fight for that. But there were no coalitions, there were no moments, so it did become that. That's the divide and conquer I'm talking about, and it hurt brown families in the long run because then once you won this two-way immersion like I told you, it was ‘them versus a very strong middle/upper middle class, white family’ and they got everything they wanted. Whereas if you had some black allies in there, if you had done the work, now it would've been a much stronger kind of coalition that can balance some of the decisions.

Although building a dual-language program was a major feat, the cost of interracial alliances frustrated him, conceding that “I lost many battles on this.”

²¹ At only eight years old, she played an instrumental role in the landmark desegregation case *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946)

Regime politics in Berkeley tell the story of one group of parents mobilizing to takeover. What was clearly a separate slate and platform grew into a cooperative relationship with the district. As parent organizer Casal said, UIA no longer had “demands” once they had a new superintendent as an ally. Under pressure, the rest of central office worked with these parents in United for Action. Consequently, the board changed, charters finally reached Berkeley, and the 2020 Vision was in full effect. That momentum, however, got lost between the major institutions that took on the project: City of Berkeley, UC, BCC, and the district. Is the story of UIA one of cooptation? The answer is complicated. The residual effects have rippled through the policy discourse, board priorities, and even the union’s teacher of color initiative. However, there still remain entrenched inequities. As Berkeley makes strides, its achievement gap deepens and the significant working-class population it once served is displaced. Berkeley also represents a different case of regime politics. It is an “organic” regime, where actors coalesce, but their ideals and strategies are not necessarily made explicit, like racism.

Parcel Taxes & District-Union Cooperation

Whereas other urban districts like Oakland attempt to make up for structural disinvestment by turning to the private sector for support in building capacity, Berkeley looks ‘within’ for solutions. A stronger civic capacity has afforded the BUSD community different political strategies for school improvement, in many ways counter-hegemonic to neoliberal education reform. Board director Alper credited the teachers union, BFT, for thinking about the greater good of their district while fighting for members:

One of the things a lot of people need to really appreciate about [BFT] is that they do play an active role in developing district programs and policies that is not necessarily obvious. It's not only to help their members; it's to improve the district. And so, they get a lot of credibility from the board and from the district staff through doing that.

In collaborating with the district on issues that outside of teacher pay and caseload, union leadership was positioned as experts and allies in educational issues, both instructional and financial, as opposed to adversaries across the aisle from each other.

There are a few programmatic and policy strategies that have created an impact under the advocacy of BFT. First, teachers are situated as experts in policy and program implementation that is often coordinated through teachers on special assignment (TSAs) positions. the BFT’s Teachers of Color Network is led by teachers of color, which Cathy helped to create and sustain by paying teachers for this labor. It is an effort that demonstrates that unions, and public education advocacy more broadly, are not only to serve white people. This racial justice lens has spilled over into other areas outside of bread-and-butter issues, as Director Alper explained:

They were very instrumental in a lot of the discipline-related stuff, including restorative justice. And if you look at other districts, it tends to be teachers who are a little bit skeptical: 'don't take away this toolbox of suspensions or expulsions from us.' But the [BFT] makes that point too, like “you need to invest in alternatives, which cost money.” But they're also very supportive of trying to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline in a way that I haven't really heard from other teachers’ unions.

Second, BFT leadership played a role in convincing central office to give the entire district time off to lobby the state legislature. The union has been very influential in terms of creating change and redefining the goals and purpose of public education, and what role the labor of educators plays in

that. Interestingly, it did not take much to convince the racially diverse school board, which shared these values.

In the political arena, the BFT has major influence in choosing school board members through endorsements, more influential and effective than the union in Oakland. The recruitment process begins two to three years before an election. As Campbell explained,

The union invests a lot of time in spending time with board members. We do a rigorous endorsement process. When we endorse you, we do a lot to help you get elected. People generally can't get elected unless we endorse them. We have a big pile of money if we ever need it to make sure someone we don't want to have win doesn't win. So I think that part of it is that we just have been a little more politically involved... that was the other big change I think I made from my predecessor. He was like, "Whatever... whoever gets elected." I mean we did interviews, but it just wasn't the same. I really think it's a big deal and I think it's where you get a lot of your power from because ultimately it's a public good and the union should be part of making that public good better. The stewards are the board. The staff is important, but in the end it's the board.

She credited the teacher union scholar-activist Lois Weiner's *The Future of Schools* as a critical resource in her development and political orientation as a labor leader. However, she strongly disagreed with using striking as the main strategy to gain more funding:

Lois Weiner is all about, "You just gotta strike." I don't agree. You've got to really look at an agreement. When we brought the Oakland agreement to our exec board and said, "Here's what it really means." They were shocked. I mean, we supported them. Every Berkeley school adopted an Oakland school. We supported UTLA. UTLA is 3% [pay increase] over two years. What UTLA got were things that last for two years and that are going to vanish unless they manage to pass a new parcel tax. And their parcel tax failed. And the reason their parcel tax failed is because they vilified their district. You can't vilify your district and then say to the voters, "Give them a bunch more money."

From Campbell's perspective, strikes in places like Oakland and L.A. have been lauded without scrutiny about what was actually won. Instead, she chose to collaborate with the district and board on passing parcel taxes and lobbying the state for more funding, as seen in the Red For Ed action at the state capitol in Sacramento on May 22, 2019. "[W]hat is your locus?" she pressed, "Is your locus the local, or is your locus the state where the funding comes from?" Campbell has taken a collaborative strategy that she credits to her teaching days: "I'm a middle school teacher — it has to be practical."

Berkeley has had very contentious political moments around reforming their public schools, from experimental schools and desegregation in the 1960s and 1970s to small schools, the 2020 Vision, charter schools in the 2000s. Yet in the last decade, since 2010, there has not been major conflict around education projects, despite potential issues with union contract negotiations and approximately \$4 million in budget cuts between the 2018-29 and 2019-2020 school years. The school board held a general consensus that educational inequity was bigger than the district and spoke out about the problems with the state underfunding public education. As BUSD leaders moved towards collaboration, some stakeholders felt they were unresponsive. Meanwhile, OUSD has been in chaos; from the national news profiles about divisive superintendents, to board meetings that stretch past midnight with parents' pleas not to close schools or cut staff, to the constant threat of another state takeover.

Contestation, Resistance, and Alternatives to the Regime

Those people and groups with the power to govern do not unanimously control their public schools. In 2019, my last year of fieldwork, the nation was rocked by the “teacher revolt.” Wildcat strikes filled with teachers demanding more pay and better working and learning conditions first spread across red states, eventually sparking resistance within blue states and cities, like Berkeley and Oakland. The Oakland Education Association (OEA) went on strike for a record seven days, the first time since 1996 (citation). Thousands of students, families, teachers, school site staff, community members, and supporters took to the streets to resist poor pay, budget cuts, and school closures. Charter schools were named a culprit in the district’s financial issues, signaling a turn in hegemonic support for neoliberal policies. Separate from OEA, the strike and its surrounding momentum was the culmination of a few groups’ efforts to organize parents against closures, TFA, charter expansion, and other privatization in OUSD.

While it was more difficult to pinpoint regimes politics in Berkeley since there has been more coordination amongst its leaders, as opposed to factions and slates in Oakland, there are points of contention and dissent. The Red for Ed movement gave voice to a smaller group of teachers frustrated by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) leadership, who they felt were undemocratic in handling their workers’ concerns with management. In BUSD at large, many Black, and some Latinx, parents have been consistently outspoken in their critiques around racism and complacency in their school system. The last time there was a coordinated effort around advancing educational equity strategies was a decade ago in 2010 with the 2020 Vision, and some feel that those efforts have faded away. The way its core organizing group, United in Action, mobilized and institutionalized its vision illuminate the potential and limitations of institution-based leadership.

Oakland

Community Resistance to the Portfolio Regime and Austerity

Despite the rhetoric, Oakland residents do not see “unity.” They continue to experience disruption and feel left out of decision-making. Instead, as I show in the previous sections, this idea has been promoted by a regime of actors through financing elections, cultivating new leadership within Oakland Unified that is connected to a local-national neoliberal network of actors beyond the district, and digging deeper to right the wrongs of past charter efforts, particularly with re-engaging Black families. Talking in depth with stakeholders leading and contesting their district’s reorganization complicates one popular narrative that compromise and unity are “what the people want” and will serve in the best interest of all Oakland students. There were many examples of community resistance from my fieldwork, overwhelmingly in response to closures and budget cuts. In February 2019, tensions culminated around the teachers strike, with large protests against closures, national media coverage, and police violence at board meetings. In examining the post-charter school movement politics, working class families of color are dealing with the disillusion following charter and district school closures.

Roots International Academy was a district middle school in east Oakland serving mostly Black students. There were months of educator mobilization and board member deliberation until it was ultimately closed in January 2019. Coinciding with the teachers strike the following month, the grassroots organizing caught the attention of public radio and *Mother Jones* among other national and local media, which one teacher was quoted saying, “We’re like a family. Y’all basically separating us” (Rios, 2019). In contrast to the portrayal of failing schools, one Roots teacher attempted to “shift the narrative” about her “magical” school at a community forum:

I just wanted to shift your narrative about our school. Our school was in the process of transforming into a school that was beautiful for students. Students felt seen. Teachers were staying. We had just completed a three-year arts grant through the Alameda County of Education where we were integrating arts into our practice, which is very rare for schools that are in high needs areas. We were teaching kids about the school-to-prison pipeline. My final year, we started our year planning on our own time a defense project. The whole school watched eight graders talk about how to reduce criminalization and find solutions, whether it be through justice or eliminating police. They were learning about the 13th amendment and implicit bias in their brains in their science classes. In my class, we lifted the suspension rates and how it's disproportionate based off of race: 66% of Black students were being suspended although 66% of OUSD is not Black students. And that's what students were learning at Roots. They were learning about themselves and the power of their history.

The closure had devastating effects on the school community, but the way it was done made it even worse, according to this teacher, through a special board meeting that was closed to the public:

So what happened? Last December, we had a bunch of school district people come to our school and tell us that they wanted to close our school because we had too many schools in the district, we're not going to performing and our attendance is low. They did not engage us. They had one meeting that they announced and it was very last minute, and they told the parents what they were going to do. They met with their staff and that was about it. Our Director Shanthi Gonzales was not available during this process. The next school board meeting we demanded a circle, and we asked that the school board members come off of the stage and listen and hear what happened. It was very emotional and obviously traumatic for a lot of people. It was hard to see it and do it, but it was a moment for fighting for what our students deserve.

She spoke, almost in tears, about the way they pitted their school with the other district school that they shared a campus with, which only accepted eight students from Roots. "So our kids were going to be displaced and not allowed to go to the school that was across the street from their house," she explained, pointing out that they were placed in schools that are once again, in October 2019, slated for closure, "Our kids will again be in an unstable environment through another closure if it happens. They're going to continue to have a destabilized education and harm." While the "institutional mourning" (Ewing, 2018) that follow school closures can disillusion teachers, families, and students, they have also proven to be the gateway to more active, and sometimes radical, engagement by parent and students. Continuing to organize was difficult for the Roots teacher, admitted that it has been the hardest thing she has done because She urged the audience of community members to "continue the fight with me because it's hard to do it on your own. We need everyone." She also had a warning for other people worried about their school and the state of education: "It was so easy to wipe us off -- We fought until we couldn't, but it was quick and fast, and then done. We have to come together, or else this will be the end of public education."

With the help of new union leadership, discussed in the following sections, Director Shanthi Gonzales sees a growing movement against privatization that has weakened influence of the portfolio regime:

We also have shown resistance. I don't think there was any resistance before to the education reform agenda for the most part. We were able to resist having a common enrollment system. We were able to resist those five schools being taken over and turned over to charter

schools. I think we successfully organized against all those things. That has helped to rebuild parent power because it was parent house parties where we used to spread the word about stopping common enrollment. I think parent organizations are growing in power. I think it's slow and will continue to grow because those folks are continuing to organize and bring more schools and more parent leaders into the mix. I think power is a little bit more evenly distributed now than it used to be. The education reform people are definitely not as powerful and I think grassroots parent power is more ascendant.

Her description identifies different strategies, from parent house parties to direct action, some of which were successful in their demands, such as stopping common enrollment. Table 7 identifies the public education organizations active between 2011 and 2019:

Table 7. Public Education Organizations Active (2011-2019)

Organization	Purpose
Justice for Oakland Students (J4OS) Coalition	A project of Oakland Kids First, the coalition of community organizations works on educational equity and racial justice “through shared analysis, narrative change, policy campaigns, and new structures.” Includes many groups below: Bay Area PLAN, Parents United for Public Schools, Oakland Education Association (OEA), Parent Voices, Black Organizing Project, Equity Allies, Californians for Justice (CFJ), Brotherhood of Elders, Concerned Families of Students with Disabilities, AYPAL, Youth Together, Educators for Democratic Schools (EDS), and Teachers for Social Justice
California Educators Rising (Sept. 2018)	A rank-and-file led network of educators and supporters of public education, with a strong focus on fully funded public education through progressive taxation.
Oakland Public Education Network (OPEN) (2012)	Founded by Mike Hutchinson and Joel Velasquez in 2012 as a response to the Oakland school board’s decision to close five public schools. The coalition of parents, teachers, and community members provides information through social media and advocates at school board meetings against public school closures, for authentic community engagement, and firmly “against the effort to privatize public education through charter schools and the outsourcing of services.”
Oakland Educators Association	Teachers union with new leadership, described below, shifting towards social justice unionism and grassroots activism
Classroom Struggle (2011)	A leftist caucus in the OEA born out of Occupy Oakland comprised of teachers, parents, substitute teachers, after school instructors, youth workers and community activists. Shared information on their blog and newsletter, hosted rallies, and held political education events and happy hours.
Parents United (2015)	Founded during contract negotiations between Oakland teachers and OUSD in the winter of 2014/15, a parent group focused on shifting budget priorities to strengthen community schools and stave off privatization.

Equity Allies (2016)	A group of parents and community members “who want equity in opportunities, access and outcomes for all children” in OUSD, with a strong focus on integrated schools. Work includes fundraising for under resourced schools, hosting a yearly Equity Forum, and collaborating on podcast listening events.
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN) (2004)	A non-profit building the “power of parents to transform schools so that all children achieve student success.” Since 2015, under new leadership, they have been more vocal and active against closures and fighting against privatization.

These groups have broadly fought to ‘defend and transform public education’ along with educational researchers (many of whom are self-identified scholar-activists), professors, and a few journalists. The growing list of organizations and informal groups dedicated to public education is symbolic of the change in the political landscape. To put it simply, it got easier to mobilize communities against charters with Trump (and DeVos) in office — an identifiable villain that embodies privatization:

It sounds bad, but the two best things to happen for my organizing over the last year and a half were actually Trump’s election and the NAACP’s moratorium. Because now it’s not just me saying it. I would say, “Look, conservative NAACP is saying the same thing.” And it was really hard fighting against Obama’s Department of Education. It’s much easier fighting against Trump’s even though it’s the same policies.

The NAACP and the Movement for Black Lives called for a moratorium in 2016, the same year Trump was elected, which points to a clearer formation of political camps, particularly around charter schools. Director Gonzales echoed Hutchinson’s point about the changing politics at the state and federal level:

Charter schools know that the next governor is not going to be their friend the way that Jerry Brown has been, and so there’s a lot of fear in the charter community right now. They know that their stock is down. Partly it’s because of Trump and Betsy DeVos. Charter school people know that they’re not seen as this amazing panacea anymore.

Charter schools are no longer a bipartisan project, and are increasingly criticized among progressives.

With more power comes more difficult and tiring grassroots organizing work, especially as more newly-politicized people get involved and need to learn the terrain. Activist Mike Hutchinson admitted that it is easy for longtime organizers to get lost in the work, “we all start to feel like everyone should know this.”

But in Oakland, and then a lot of us kind of who know, we’re still at the front wave of things. It’s like, we want a shortcut, we want it to be solved right away. But we are really still at the front wave in just knowing about what’s going on. And even about these changes. And so the kind of the curve in Oakland has been more, and more people now know what’s happening. And as people find out, they get upset. It is literally the organizing part. It is person by person by person. And there is no shortcut of me plugging into another organization and they’re already doing it. It literally is bringing in one person at a time.

Amongst those “resisters” to the portfolio regime, there is a lot of disagreement about what strategy to take in challenging privatization. More established groups with funding are criticized for moderate tactics and silencing direct action protests, like sit-ins. Hutchinson explained:

Yes, we are fighting the billionaires, and the charter schools, and the privatizers. But we also have this small group of people called the “gatekeepers” who really want to orchestrate and control what's going on. And they say they're against the same things as us. But then they actively work to kind of control it themselves.

These divisions among public education advocacy bring to mind the diverse and divergent ideologies that comprised and eventually divided the charter movement, whose coalition members were often referred to as “unlikely bedfellows” (Fuller, 2009). The differences in these public education coalitions may not be as wide as, say, a billionaire philanthropist and working-class mother fighting for the Parent Trigger Law, but the commitment to core ideas and strategies is stronger (and stubborn) among the Left. These advocates easily coalesce against privatization broadly, but differ in their approaches on how to bring anger about an abstract enemy into a tangible strategy. Public education activist groups like Parents United, Classroom Struggle, and Oakland Public Education Network have used social media and blogging to share their concerns about the growing marketization and their own research as watchdogs of the regime’s financial connections:

We must hold our OUSD Board and District officials responsible for their “astonishing” failure to do what is right for our children. We must also be very clear that by interfering in our local electoral process, GO and its billionaire backers have undermined our democracy and our public school system, and they will attempt to do it again in 2020. It is up to us to stop them. (Parents United blog, 6/30/2019)

It is clear that the political campaigns under Oakland’s portfolio regime clash with the realities of teachers, students, and parents protesting budget cuts, school closures, and private contracting, culminating in huge walk-outs and teach-ins during the Oakland Educators Union teacher strike. Issues around disruption, autonomy, and democratic participation persist, revealing fissures in charter reform movement. Desiring a good school “by any means necessary,” no matter whether it is a district or charter school does not represent the diversity of perspectives on the ground. Community members are more skeptical about how a new policy idea is packaged, particularly the role of funders helicoptering in and out, and they also know that money or autonomy comes with a price. This deeper skepticism follows years of experimentation in Oakland.

Rift Among Charter Advocates about District Collaboration and Compromise

With growing pushback at the school sites against school closures and budget cuts, more students and teachers have been politicized about how charter schools and other forms of privatization have affected their schools. When asked about who she considered her allies, GO director of community organizing Mirella Rangel instead complained about the lack of support at the grassroots level. She explained that individuals in organizations like the Latino Educator Network would tell her, “I can support you. But as an organization, we cannot endorse 1Oakland.” She lamented the decline in her organization’s popularity:

If you haven't figured it out, I feel like we're the unpopular kids in the high school where people are like, "I like hanging out with you when we're alone, but I don't want to be seated in the quad with you."

GO Public Schools faces a tension of being deeply influential in Oakland, yet increasingly unpopular among other community members and organizations. Brian McGhee, program manager of OUSD's African American Male Achievement Office, expressed his reservations with GO's impact in his community:

I don't know what they've all done. They may have a meaningful heart, but what are their intentions? Because people flip flop. And they may be "Go public schools!" but GO Public Schools with an asterisk: "We want to become the charter." So I have to watch certain organizations and see because even some of the organizations don't look like us.

This mistrust of GO, accelerated by the 2019 teachers strike, revealed cracks in the portfolio regime.

Moreover, the divide between portfolio architects and some charter advocates reveals critical tensions around governance, autonomy, and privatization of public provision. Scholars studying portfolio management theorize that this is in fact distinct from the charter movement while public school activists have framed the two as part of the same neoliberal project, the latter of which were focal arguments in the Los Angeles and Oakland teachers' strikes (Blanc, 2019; Caputo-Pearl, 2019). However, many charter advocates in California have been quite hesitant about district collaboration at the expense of more regulation of charter schools.

Longtime collaborators GO Public Schools and the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) disagreed over the details of the 1Oakland campaign. The original draft of the plan had called for a two-year "conditional pause" on charters and for charter schools to pay for some of OUSD's debt to the state that has grown since the state receivership (Barnum, 2019). This caused a storm of backlash from parts of the charter community up to the state level, where CCSA regional director Max Daigh wrote an angry email to the list of endorsers who had signed a shorter petition that did not include this detail of the plan. He wrote, "1Oakland's ask drastically misses the point [...] You have the right to never be 'cornered' by signing a petition in which you have half the information." Most of his argument discredited any benefit to charter schools since they already have access to facilities and parcel taxes under current California charter law and Proposition 39.

The conflict between traditional allies in the charter school movement, like GO and CCSA, also occur red at the national level where the original architects based out of the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) have worked to convince district and charter leaders alike about the potential of portfolio models. Researchers at the CRPE, led by Paul Hill, shared market ideals with other neoliberal ideologues, but with a different strategy to get there. In his book, the 'skeptics' are also charter management leaders and advocates who are not sold on regulation or limiting their autonomy in significant ways. In conversation, Hill maneuvered back to the agnostic perspective that defines portfolio advocacy, "I think it's just a matter of currently who we're embroiled with." He pointed to issues with both 'sides':

I still think the bigger question is convincing people in districts that this is something in the interest of kids and something in their interest, and not something that should be rejected out of hand. And there certainly is literature we've written about it. I do know that I had thought, and I think Robin Lake [current CRPE director] would agree, that the core of the portfolio idea was basically a public sector idea – giving the public sector a new set of tools. But all that was under threat for people who just saw the solution as all charters, each by each, as independent as they could possibly be. And we saw lots of problems with that.

Hill also pointed to the ego of some charter leaders that keep them from being more objective about creating and expanding good schools. Opening charter schools, in his experience, can result from

the same “project-itis,” or pandering to group demands, that districts resort to. From his perspective, there is a critical distinction between people who want charters for independence sake versus being a part of the larger public education system.

2019 Oakland Teachers' Strike

Bright green Oakland Education Association (OEA) signs that declare, “We Stand with Oakland Teachers” could be found hanging in apartment windows, lining the lawns of houses, and proudly displayed in businesses across the city, including taquerias, barber shops, and cooperative cafes. OEA had been building for a strike for six months with art builds and other community events when a wildcat strike started at Fremont High School in East Oakland weeks before the union officially declared a strike on February 21, 2019. Oakland teachers were ready and they had widespread community support in hand.

Part of the work in building for a strike had to do with the change in the teachers union leadership. According to board director Shanthi Gonzales, the OEA had “not been a very powerful player” since she was elected 2014, but she sees that changing with their strategy:

I think with a new president and a real commitment to doing more grassroots solidarity work with other organizations is going to be huge. It's going to help them win a better contract, but it's also going to help them just to be seen as more of an ally with other groups.

In Gonzales' work, which has largely been seen by many (but not all) public education activists as helpful in fighting privatization in OUSD, she worked to mobilize a coalition that essentially worked counter to the education regime, however, it was missing strong union representation. OEA president Keith Brown, who is African American, and vice-president Ismael “Ish” Armendariz, who is Mexican American, brought a different purpose, strategy, and ideology in shifting the union with their social justice slate that took over in 2018. Armendariz discussed the way it has shaped community relations and disarmed critiques against OEA:

I think one of the good things about having me and Keith as the top two in OEA is that we're both men of color. A lot of the attempts to frame OEA as racist have disappeared. I think one of the assets that Keith has is it that he was born, raised, and went to all Oakland public schools. He's really respected in the community, and I think because of that, people within those meetings and within those kinds of spaces are starting to coalesce. People are on board. And he's bringing in new people who understand the context of privatization but who were never connected. That's one of the things that he's really, really working right now, particularly Black churches.

This is important as many Black teachers, community leaders, and organizations involved in movement-building organizing were less outwardly critical of privatization, instead focusing on police brutality or disproportionate discipline in the schools. But according to Armendariz, there was a lot more work that the union needs to do:

We haven't done our work — what I mean is the organizing. OEA has a very interesting history in Oakland. Particularly there's a lot of fracture within the Black community and the way they view teachers. The 1996 strike was a huge one where it really broke us more. A lot of Black teachers crossed the line. There was a Black superintendent, [and] a lot of churches felt that was racist. There are a lot of things there, but we've also never done our work. Again, the way we think about the union is the way we're talking about community

organizing. We have allies who we've just never organized with and built coalition around. I think they understand privatization, but we've also only talked about, "they're the enemy" and it's never like, "then here's what we're talking about. Here's what our vision is." I think because a lot of educational justice right now is on men of color, we're able to take that message and talk about, "Yes, the school system's fucked up. We all acknowledge that. [...] We're part of it and it's fucked up, but we're looking to improve public education." I think that is where we never were able to connect with people on.

It is not enough to criticize elites' role in spurring privatization; mobilizing people around educational justice means standing for something instead of always being "anti." As men of color, they have tapped into their experiential knowledge about the oppressive conditions of school. But as they engage working class communities of color who intimately understand the disruptions of neoliberal reforms, there has to be a vision for something better, and this vision is still rooted in a public good. He shared these thoughts of where OEA needed to improve a month before the strike, which demonstrated that the union and its allies had already done a lot of the work to connect these dots.

OEA finally went on strike in February of 2019, which lasted seven days. There was widespread community support, with solidarity schools across the city for families to take their children to. With the help of California Educators Rising, a statewide network of education activists, these schools were "adopted" and supported with donations everyday people and other organizations, such as the Berkeley Federation and the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education. High school students were particularly inspired, and they would often lead chants at the protests the stretched across the city until everyone coalesced downtown. Moreover, many teachers that had previously veered away from politics had also gotten swept up by the spirit of the protests. Educator and OEA organizer Becca Rozo-Marsh described the comradery:

Many of my co-workers have not been at all interested in politics and actively refused to go to meetings — even ones on campus during their lunch. I was so nervous the night before the strike about what the picket line would look like at my site, at the 85 other schools around the city, and how many people would show up to the city-wide event in Downtown Oakland. It was beautiful. Starting at 6:30 am my co-workers came out and we chanted, marched, made up songs, danced. Neighbors and allies brought us so much food everyday that we were always fed and had leftovers. Some of our students emerged with the strongest and most creative chanting voices, deepest analysis, and even helped us storm the State Building. (Eastlake United, 2019)

With the help of a broader social movement around labor stirring activism among new and veteran teachers, the OEA had been doing the work to arrive at the strong support that Rozo-Marsh described. Notably, only three percent of students showed up to schools thanks to the solidarity schools set up and "adopted" by sister schools in Berkeley and other cities as well as the Graduate School of Education. Furthermore, mainstream media had been largely sympathetic, along with emerging Left and progressive publications like Vox and Jacobin, which published op-eds and political analyses from the teacher activists themselves.

Rozo-Marsh explained that during the strike they used the "aspirational messaging of 'Schools Oakland Students Deserve' which moved people onto the picket lines and marches. We went on strike not for a specific percentage or number in our classrooms but for a dream of what education can be." And their "wins" represented this shift in framing. After seven days on strike, OUSD and OEA representatives began to make compromises. Educators won reductions in class size and

special education caseloads as well as newly-created support positions for Newcomer students — possibly the first school district in the entire state to do so. Compensation was raised 11 percent over four years plus a 3 percent bonus, which nearly doubled what district officials had offered before teachers walked off the job (Fernandez Campbell, 2019). The pay raise, they argued, was critical for making OUSD competitive with other districts in their teacher recruitment and retention. However, there were many disgruntled strikers, who believed that the union should've fought harder, specifically for a moratorium on school closures as well as for more benefits for non-classified staff. Only 64 percent of OEA members voted in favor of a contract for 2017–18 and just 58 voted for the 2020–2021 contract (OEA, 2019). BFT president Cathy Campbell also pointed out some discrepancies around it actually being a five-year contract since they had been working without a contract for a year. A pay raise of 2.5% per year is quite behind the cost of living in the Bay Area. Becca admitted some of these problems as well:

Honestly, I look back at it with some sadness because we did not win all that we wanted, and of course, did not win all that we deserve. It is both beautiful and heartbreaking. How wonderful to know our worth. How tragic to return to conditions that continue to be oppressive. We didn't win enough and we are not satisfied. So all of us are dealing with that in different ways, but I don't think we will lose that feeling of unity, of power. We are getting ready for the next time we need it.

Despite these limitations, some argued that Oakland teachers won the war of ideas.

Similar to United Teachers of Los Angeles, the OEA strike identified portfolio districts as one source of problems. Even leaders in the portfolio regime sent emails to their listservs that were sympathetic to the teachers' plight, although they were silent about privatization as a source of the district's problems. Instead, they urged everyone to advocate for more funding at the state level. GO Public Schools, relying on a third party fact-checking report, stated:

“[We’re] convinced that the district cannot meet the teachers’ union’s demands in full and stay solvent -- and insolvency would mean a state takeover with a bureaucrat appointed in Sacramento assuming control of the district, rather than Supt. Johnson-Trammell and the elected school board. No one wins in such a situation -- least of all our kids.” (Email communication, 2/20/2019)

Once again, economic crisis looms as the not so silent threat that prevents the district and the state from paying their teacher what they felt was deserved. Other portfolio actors were more outwardly critical. The State of Black Education (SoBE), a forum led by Charles Cole III and TFA alumni, sent out an email titled, “what was the real cost of the strike” which attempted to break down the cost of instructional minutes lost alongside profiles of Black teachers and students “traumatized” by the strike. Using agnostic language that echoes the portfolio discourse, he claimed not to be “pro-strike” or anti-strike” and rather “pro-Oakland”:

Thankfully the Oakland teachers’ strike is over and kids and teachers are back in buildings. This was a painful time in Oakland for many of us and there is still healing that needs to happen. There are both tangible and intangible costs to this all—and while we can calculate the lost revenue to OUSD, lost salary to teachers, and lost learning to students, we may not be able to quantify the costs to the community so easily.

Cole's statement illustrates that the strike for better education conditions, inextricably linked with working conditions, These accounts conflicted with the reality of a diverse representation of teachers and students actively engaged in the strikes and walkouts, including Black educators. Again, the optics are strong in terms of messaging and building a network, but there is mixed opinions about it authentically representing what remains of Oakland's Black community. The SoBE does not list its funders or staff, but ambiguously describes itself as a "collective conversation," one that "doesn't belong to a person" nor to "an organization." Their website, however, does include a "Howard's University" page with a series of videos from Howard Fuller, the key African American figure in the voucher movement in the 1990s and 2000s. Under growing resistance to the portfolio regime at the local level and privatization at the national level, it appears that amongst people of color who have supported charter schools, the divide is split between being more sympathetic to reinvestment in public education by way of labor struggles or doubling down on educational privatization as community empowerment.

Berkeley

"Red For Ed" meets the Berkeley Federation of Teachers

As Cathy worked to increase union participation, not all BFT members have found its leadership to be democratic. While the union's collaborative approach with BUSD has increased power among its leadership to leverage better working conditions for its members, some teachers argue that it has come at the expense of participatory decision making within the union. The Red for Ed wave of teachers strikes in 2018 through 2019 emboldened rank-and-file membership in Berkeley, although BFT did not strike. Campbell shared mixed feelings about the efficacy and true impact of these strikes, admitting that they have caused tension within the union:

One thing I'll say is that I see strikes happening that are portrayed as successes that I think are failures. My takeaway is that like the other states that really did this and were successful, we have to focus our efforts on the state. That's what happened in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona. But if you do the math for Oakland and you consider it a five-year contract, their raise was 2.5% per year, 11% over five years. But you get people saying, "It doesn't matter. We struck and we won." I don't agree.

She did credit the Red for Ed movement for bringing excitement around issues, and more concretely, galvanizing support for public education ballot measures in California, such as the Schools and Communities First initiative which would reform Prop. 13. But from her perspective, strikes need to change the material conditions of educators, schools, and students.

Josh Austin has been working as a special education teacher in BUSD for a decade when he became mobilized/radicalized by political events in 2016 and decided to get involved with his union, BFT:

I was already dissatisfied with the way things were going in this country politically from before the election in 2016, but that really brought things to the forefront. We're in a seriously dysfunctional democracy, or lack of democracy. I knew that I wanted to get involved politically in a way that I never had been. I didn't know where to work so I figured out that my union could be a place where I could express myself politically.

But he was critical of some undemocratic aspects to their 2017 contract process, specifically a 1% pay increase over two years and a low caseload cap for special education teachers. Frustrated by the

contract campaign, fired up after the Trump election, and then inspired by red state teacher strikes, Austin found a political home through United Caucus of Rank and File Educators (UCORE), a grassroots network focused on “reforming unions to make them more militant and rank-and-file initiated.” He was pulled in by friends involved in Classroom Struggle, the Leftist social justice caucus in the Oakland teachers union, and group of 15 educators held meetings in each other’s living rooms across the Bay Area. They formed California Educators United²¹ to broaden their base to teachers, parents, and community activists, similar to groups formed in Arizona and West Virginia during the teachers’ strike. “It takes a village to raise a child” he explained, “We just try to open up to as many people as we can to have a bigger movement.” Austin offered to start a Facebook group, a key form of communication that linked local and national organizing efforts.

This, in turn, fueled his involvement as a site representative for BFT, where he saw a “dramatically different” contract campaign between the 2017 and 2019 contract campaigns. The Supreme Court *Janice* decision put immense pressure on unions, even strong ones like BFT. This altered both the finances and the purpose of unions, and BFT had more incentive to democratize union decision-making.

I really tried to push for an organizing model, and we ended up adopting contract action teams at every site. We adopted some of [UTLA’s] organizing methods. I think the leadership in my union felt the pressure and felt like the times were changing and with the Janice decision, unions were changing and we needed to go back to the roots of real organizing.

Austin pushed many initiatives, such as open bargaining, which he learned about through friends in UAW 2865 UC Student-Workers Union. The idea of having non-bargaining team members at bargaining sessions was shut down by BUSD administrators. However, special education teachers were invited to the bargaining sessions as guests, thus incorporating rank-and-file members not on the bargaining team. They “pushed leadership” to adopt other demands around working conditions, not just salary, which led to special education caseload caps and assessment caps, plus a 5 percent pay increase over two years. In addition,

...the contract provides for an additional increase of 7%, effective July 1, 2020, subject to the passage of a special tax measure to address educator recruitment and retention, anticipated for the March 2020 ballot. With the passage of the tax measure in March, this 12% increase will make Berkeley salaries more competitive in Alameda County. (BUSD, 2019)

Austin proudly stated, “I think because of the rank and file involvement that wasn’t there previous - at least I didn’t see any evidence of it - we were able to have the bargaining be more inclusive of the broader range of voices within the union.”

Another piece about California Educators United is that it served as a big tent between the two “business unions,” the California Teachers Association (NEA affiliate) and the California Federation of Teachers (AFT affiliate), unions that have long competed over representing locals across the state, parallel to their national affiliates across the country. The Red For Ed rally at the state capitol in 2019 saw thousands of people pouring into the streets to demand more funding, but not before CFT and CTA held separate camps for food and mingling before lobbying state legislators, again, separately. The two unions held one combined rally, where people in the crowd could be heard lamenting about the number of union presidents that spoke instead of hearing from actual educators (Josh Austin was the exception). Nonetheless, Campbell cautioned that Red For Ed

was going to lose focus by pushing for both compensation and teachers and students-to-student supports:

But it's easy for that second one to get lost. As unions we have to keep having a broad view, or all of us are at risk of these outside groups coming in and saying, "I have the answer. And your teachers, all they're doing is fussing with you about money and class size and caseload size," which is student supports. But people don't always see it that way. So I have concerns.

In other words, rhetoric centered on teacher pay would lose supporters. However, this has not been the case in recent years, where strikes washed away decades of TFA-led reform that at its core located teachers as the problem and solution, essentially villainizing them. Instead, there is a growing sympathy from the public, particularly noticeable in sympathetic media pieces. Furthermore, a 2019 Education Next poll found that 72% of the general public supports an increase in teacher pay, up from 61% in 2017.

To summarize, the resistance to the civic regime mainly lies in efforts to democratizing the teachers union. What is missing is a strong push for racial justice, akin to what United In Action accomplished the decade prior. There continues to be resistance and attempts to subvert White supremacy which are evident in the public comment at board meetings, where parents spoke out about their unanswered questions. The Parents of Children of African Descent (PCAD) is a long-standing organization that in recent years has coordinated campaigns and events against police officers in schools and budget cuts while advocating for more inclusion in the LCAP process, but the work is sporadic and the turnover in parent leaders is high as many working class Black families are displaced from the city and many middle class Black families put their kids into private schools or outside of the district.

Discussion

Oakland and Berkeley's public schools are zones of contestation where hegemony is reified, redefined, and resisted. As previous chapters illuminate, structural change for each district will take more than local-level solutions. However, the zone of contestation matters considering how iterations, now generations, of neoliberal policies are justified through public consent. The local stakeholders who are involved — through consent, contestation, or both — help to define political economic trajectories. Ultimately, any national and international economic interests need local politics to sustain it, where regimes are a key piece of the puzzle. Moreover, I argue that it is important to explore why certain ethnic and racial groups are deemed more worthy of being served in the education market of portfolio districts, and that the ways stakeholders conceptualize equity through distinct strategies and goals illuminates the possibilities for educational justice within or beyond the neoliberal political economy. The research on neoliberal education reform has demonstrated hard lessons about the blurred line between cooperation and cooptation (Pedroni, 2007; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004).

Oakland's *portfolio regime* redefined not only central office, but the purpose of schooling at the local scale. Tapping into the frustrations of families of color with the poor learning conditions of their neighborhood schools, the portfolio regime brought together foundations, grassroots mobilization, and policy experts to support market-oriented initiatives during the stake takeover that began in 2003. Without the provision of a democratically-elected school board, the regime supported the state administrator in introducing competition between service providers for various district responsibilities, but most influential, contracted out the governance of schools to charter management organization as well as hired consultants on various projects. When some of these initiatives proved unsuccessful and community members protested what they viewed as

undemocratic practices, the regime was pivotal in getting the school board, which regained power in 2009, along with a few superintendents to serve as partners in reorganizing central office. This is a prime example of *urban regime evolution*, where new political actors like GO Public Schools, an education reform advocacy organization, were introduced into Oakland's education landscape to build more authentically in working class and high-poverty neighborhoods. The semblance of an organic movement was buoyed by a strong media campaign and the continued support of venture philanthropists. The portfolio regime's espoused "compromise" ideals were enticing for district and charter sector leaders, but austerity fanned the flames of competition, and the regime's control of Oakland's public schools, and the portfolio idea itself, has been threatened by a newly-coalesced coalition of anti-privatization community and labor groups.

In stark comparison, Berkeley's *civic regime* was not connected to the edu-preneur network of intermediary actors, and thus was absent of all the bells and whistles that came with a highly politicized education landscape. Instead of the New York Times coverage of the latest reform idea and the hundreds of thousands of dollars spilled into school board races, much of the equity work in recent years has been measured and programmatic — far from flashy reform ideas. This is in large part shaped by the composition and values of the civic regime, led by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers alongside other unions, administrators, faith leaders, institutional representatives (e.g., UC Berkeley), and a handful of advocacy groups. With some exceptions, teachers often stepped into designing and implementing district initiatives whereas other urban districts like Oakland relied on consultants. These changes were more programmatic (e.g., instruction), and less focused on changing the district structure and turning to private funding. When district administrators and board directors did decide to make changes to school governance, it was to move away from earlier policies that introduced more autonomy and experimentation and towards centralization, such as the move from small schools academies towards the universal ninth grade. A great deal of this work, however, is thanks to United In Action, a coalition of parents of color who made racial justice front and center to the district's vision. They made major strides, and some setbacks, in the 2000s and early 2010s. This is an example of *urban regime cooptation/capitulation*, where emerging political actors forced education leaders to accept a new paradigm centered on closing the achievement gap, yet the political actors/dynamics/problems stayed essentially the same.

This comparative case study of the urban governance illuminates another dualism: the *politics of contestation* versus the *politics of complacency*. Political infighting in and around Oakland Unified has stalled some efforts to improve schooling. Sometimes the divisions within the city have prevented a more robust analysis of the state and federal policies and politicians that have far more influence in district revenue and reform. The portfolio strategy has contributed to this instability through closures that disrupt school communities, where some stakeholders, in turn, disrupt school board meetings that can run late into the night. Meanwhile, the atmosphere in Berkeley Unified is cordial and collegial, with few debates or controversies. Parents and longtime community members are not afraid to voice their opinions, but there is not a lot of public deliberation that indicates major camps (testing is one exception). Berkeley was not always this way; there have been many moments in the decades since desegregation when education politics were quite contentious, yet also moved the dial forward towards social justice. But the last decade has seen politics come to a simmer. Many board members, union representatives, and superintendents were relieved to not have to deal with the chaos that Oakland faces, but yet some stakeholders with stronger racial justice values continue to feel that BUSD lacks the urgency to make critical changes for the benefit of Black and Latinx students.

The findings in this chapter contribute to the literature on urban regimes in three key ways, identifying how the cases extend urban regime analysis as well as where it is limited. First, Oakland's portfolio regime illuminates the importance of changes *within* a regime, how power is maintained

under different political contexts, and why rival coalitions expound on crisis to make the “politically impossible become the politically inevitable,” as Milton Friedman foresaw. Analyzing these changes in strategy and discourse shows another analytical perspective on policy change. Second, Berkeley’s civic regime highlights a gap in the urban regime analysis literature that regimes do not need to be intentional or even coordinated to function as a regime. The case of United in Action reveals the tension between cooptation and cooperation, where equity ideas and representation of Black and Latinx board members became a part of the BUSD institution, yet momentum and outside strategies to hold political officials accountable had been subsumed by the Berkeley Alliance. There are limits to extending urban regime analysis to urban districts that function like suburban districts in terms of resources. Lastly, comparative analysis highlights the different strategies to district reform under similar conditions, with an attention to equity, power, and opportunity in public schools.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

A crowd of 100 students, parents, community members, and educators gathered outside of the Oakland Unified School District administrative building in downtown Oakland on a Monday afternoon. Children spray painted stencils onto the cement pavement that read, “Fund Black Futures” and “Black Sanctuary = Police Free Schools” in bright blue. With a megaphone in hand, rousing speakers from the Black Organizing Project and the Oakland Education Association called upon the remaining school board members to pass their resolution in support of not only removing police from Oakland’s public schools, but dismantling the OUSD police department as a district operation. One Black woman spoke to the crowd with righteous indignation:

It’s terrifying out here in these streets, especially out here in America when the police are killing us drastically faster than anything else out here. We need each other and we need solutions. We need to keep the police out of our school districts. We need counselors. We need teachers. We need funding for our schools. We need to have more for our young people. If our students don’t have a future, then what are we investing in?

The “Educators For Black Sanctuary” rally that took place on June 22, 2020 had the markings of past political gatherings. But this was a different kind of protest. One where nearly everyone wore face masks and familiar faces greeted each other with elbow taps as a socially-distant car caravan circled the block with protest slogans painted onto their windows. The disastrous effects of the 2020 global pandemic reverberated to all areas of life, down to the public schools. One of the most notable effects of the crisis were the new demands that emerged that would not have been possible even a few weeks prior. A coalition of parents and organizers had been working to eliminate police from Oakland’s public schools for over a decade, and suddenly an uprising made this politically possible. This is activism in the time of COVID-19 crisis, heightened by the killings of George Floyd and other Black men, women, and trans people at the hands of the police. With the economy coming to a screeching halt and the threat of a dangerous virus drastically changing social relations, uncertainty and fear loom, and yet a sense of urgency around injustice is sharpened for many. It is a time ripe for change.

At the end of this dissertation process, while wrapping up the analysis of urban crisis, racialized financial surveillance, and district reorganization under neoliberalism, an unprecedented crisis emerged that created new political arrangements pushing demands once considered too radical. These recent events have served as a glaring reminder of the “unfinished” nature of intellectual and political scholarship. As Wilkins & Olmedo (2019) explain, neoliberal education governance is “a hegemonic project and therefore continually in the making, remaking and unmaking subject to the histories, narratives and struggles of those who partake and write it” (p. 14). It is not our job as critical scholars to find singular solutions to complex social dilemmas, but rather to open up a new set of questions that interrogate power dynamics in enduring issues, which might illuminate the impermanence that can be found in even the most oppressive hegemonic projects. The struggle for justice requires “unbounded hope” (p. 14), particularly when studying the politics of education policy.

In this chapter, I bring together the themes from my findings to consider the consistencies and contradictions of neoliberal hegemony and the possibilities of a different kind of politics through a comparative case study of school district governance. This dissertation investigates how policy actors and community stakeholders in two neighboring school districts have taken divergent

approaches to confronting the same enduring issues: unequal opportunity and achievement facing Black and Latinx students, budget cuts, and public scrutiny over the purpose of schooling in the changing economy. Based on the findings presented here, I ultimately argue that moving towards educational equity in urban districts requires a multi-scalar analysis of local education politics and structural political economic conditions that considers how urban regimes, or local governing coalitions, channel grassroots activism around market-oriented or civic-oriented education policies and initiatives. Democratic mechanisms in the name of race and class justice are key to justifying privatization in districts by manufacturing consent among the public or else face more disciplinary forms of financial austerity.

Chapter 5 points to the continuous threat of budget cuts to public schools as an arbitrary and deeply racialized forms of surveillance through audit agencies like the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). This was evident in the divergent paths of each district: the 2003 state takeover of Oakland Unified created the momentum to redesign the district via the portfolio management strategy and further privatization through external actors, while Berkeley Unified leaders' collaboration with the agency helped them avoid state takeover, and thus the space to develop more measured, local approaches to school improvement. Chapter 6 examines how crisis narratives shape the evolution of district structure, where democratic engagement has served as a vehicle to foster or challenge marketization, and why alternatives are obscured in the process. A Gramscian analysis of *hegemony* (1971) illuminates the shift from *coercive* practices of financial audits to building *consent* through each district's formal engagement strategies as tools to manage public dissent around divisive decisions. Chapter 7 compares the role of urban regimes in carving out networks to build power in order to affect change in their school districts through governance reforms. In Oakland, a portfolio regime was critical in bridging neoliberal dominant ideas with local pressures to create the semblance of authenticity for philanthropic projects by mobilizing a 'grassroots' approach to private contracting, school closures, and charter school expansion in the name of equity, unity, and compromise. In contrast, the civic regime in Berkeley worked to maintain education reform within the district's oversight given the limited private sector interest in its public school, which is a source of pride or frustration depending on the stakeholder given that White parents, staff, and labor and civic leaders still led many of these efforts.

The global pandemic and national reckonings with racial justice are currently creating new political economic conditions along with new relationships that have the power to redefine the role of urban regimes in education reform. Gramsci's analysis of *hegemony* (1971) in conversation with concepts like *civic capacity* (Stone et al., 2001) illuminate the context-specific examples of *neoliberal translations and refusals* (Wilkins, 2018) in each school district under crisis. This study's findings regarding public and private forms of governance hold implications for the future of OUSD and BUSD as these districts contend with uncertain political and economic futures.

Contributions to Research

This dissertation contributes to the research literature in a few key ways. I consider how the changing role of district governance, one that privileges private contracting and partnerships, has redefined which stakeholders hold power and how decisions are being made, and its significance in transformative change for equitable, democratic public education. Whereas public discourse and academic research on the portfolio strategy have centered on district-charter relations, these cases build a comprehensive analysis of portfolio districts and district governance by weaving in the perspectives from those with the most at stake — parents, teachers, students, classified staff, central office administrators, school board members, philanthropists, and superintendents alike. In tracing

how advocates for and against education regimes build power, data on community engagement in political coalitions reveals complex alliances and strategies that do not align with strict ideological paradigms.

Education regimes are built in tandem with structural factors, economic capital of certain families, the city's capacity to tax, and the demographics of its residents, particularly by race. This dissertation on urban governance illuminates the implications of the portfolio strategy in redefining democratic engagement for low-income families and families of color, and in particular, the limitations of "equity" strategies in school districts that rely on private contracting. Public schools are embedded within a broader ecosystem of social policies, yet despite this inextricable link with the local political economy, education reforms like the portfolio strategy continue to be marketed and evaluated in a managerial sense (Trujillo, 2014) that relies heavily on outcomes and economic efficiency. Cities are transforming as gentrification processes incentivize higher-income workers to move to urban centers as poor and working-class communities of color are pushed out, unable to afford the high rent. The demographic and economic changes in American cities deserve a closer look in relation to emerging public-private partnerships in urban districts (Cucchiara, 2013).

By tracing the evolution of two urban districts through a sociopolitical and historical lens, this project begins to refine this elusive strategy by highlighting an understudied area: democratic engagement. Political mobilization is key in governance changes in school districts. How people are making sense of these district reforms shows opportunities of resistance through a different face and message. What these cases demonstrate is that local is not synonymous with community, and that the effects of a takeover are long lasting. The research implications of these distinct district reform strategies lead us to consider how these values and goals are inscribed into governance reform, and interrogates what makes a space or effort "local" when embedded in a national, elite advocacy network of business leaders. Portfolio regimes, in attempting to "reform" a reform, are adapting to criticism with a new rhetoric, yet maintain the same mechanisms and funders. This illuminates a contested space, unlike other portrayals of district "types." While Berkeley's civic regime still struggles with surface-level representation that has not substantially improved learning conditions for students of color, it illuminates oft-understudied initiatives: equity-oriented school improvement, that relies on local actors and public capacity rather than intermediaries.

Gentrification is a theme that unfolds across levels: demography, industry, and political representation. Portfolio regime leaders in Oakland are very aware of the community resentment of gentrification and gentrifiers. This has resulted in a form of representation politics where intermediary organizations and advocacy groups put the voices and faces of people from Oakland on a platform, while the ideas and language are plucked from neoliberal think tanks and funded by foundations, conservative and progressive alike. In understanding democracy as multi-scalar, intergovernmental relations (IGR) is as central to understanding "public good" as how community stakeholders are engaged (or disengaged). The state takeover of OUSD bypassed meso-level governance because some form of local democracy was seen as a problem, yet this was also happening with a disgruntled base, some of whom were feeling empowered by small schools and the philanthropically-funded community engagement efforts. My work points to the critical tensions between different marginalized communities around district jobs and services, building on the work of urban politics scholars and education historians (Morel, 2018; Straus, 2009).

Theoretical Implications

There is a shift in the hegemony of market-based ideologies and practices, and education reform/governance provides one illustration of these changing power dynamics. An infallible, four decades-long belief in neoliberalism has been threatened by a growing disillusion with marketization.

What was once viewed as the rational solution (privatization) to social problems (unresponsive, inefficient, and unequal bureaucracy), has proven to create new problems and deepen existing ones. These tectonic shifts can be felt in places like Berkeley and Oakland, California, where urban school districts serve as zones of mediation (Oakes et al., 1998). I argue that the evolution of governance evolves — the before, after, and why — requires bringing a state analysis back into the study of education politics.

Labor movements are one example of this rejection of austerity, from the major seven-day teachers strike led by the Oakland Education Association to the quiet rumblings of rank-and-file decision-making within the Berkeley Federation of Teachers. The growing community resistance to school closures in Oakland Unified has put into question the utility of “right-sizing” schools and other technocratic approaches to determining the value of a school through a narrow outcomes-focused measures. And charter schools — the longtime darling of the political Right and the Left — has been under scrutiny for over decade for financial mismanagement and poor test scores, and most importantly, pushing out Black, severely-disabled, English learner/newcomer and other marginalized students they were supposed to better serve. Educational leaders in Berkeley Unified, which has served as a place filled with redistributive values and policies that run counter-hegemonic (Sum, 2005) to the neoliberal paradigm, are now moving outside of their relatively sheltered bubble to demand that state legislators and the governor’s office give more money for all schools alongside wealthy and poor districts.

Public schools, resting between the state and civil society with strong market influence, are led by administrators who are adapting to community and class demands through compromise. The portfolio strategy is one attempt to remedy the unraveling caused by neoliberal education reform by situating the district as the manager of public and private services. Drawing on Jessop (2000), Wilkins and Olmedo (2019) describe education governance as emerging from state and market failure. This directly aligns with portfolio governance, which my work indicates emerged as a critique of charter advocacy frames as much as central office. Similar to network governance theorists (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010), third-way strategies like portfolio management were a response to state and market failure that identified networks and public-private partnerships as an innovative, transparent, and empowering form of governance. Garnering public consent for portfolio governance has taken different approaches varying by place, and in the Oakland case, district officials were as involved as intermediaries and philanthropists. But as Davies (2011, 2012) and other scholars have pointed out, many of the same issues have only been exacerbated. I found in Oakland that the portfolio strategy is a contradiction in itself. New *modalities*, such as innovation hubs, design labs, common enrollment process for charter and district schools, and new *discursive* and *political strategies* (Anderson & Donchik, 2016), “unity” rhetoric and community engagement practices have focused more on managing the problems with educational privatization rather than mitigating them. Restructuring an organization will not replace the work of redistribution in confronting inequality.

In Berkeley Unified, the conscious decision by central office and the school board to stave off venture philanthropy and redistribute the local wealth amongst their integrated public schools was a major feat that took political will. That said, maintaining the “public” in public education is still not enough to address educational inequities. The education politics of Berkeley reveal the problems and limits of racial liberalism, where it took decades of programs and campaigns (and some public shaming) for White leaders to take responsibility for the achievement gap in a time when racial injustice was marked by colorblindness and apathy. The 2020 Vision took a collective impact approach to addressing racial and economic inequity by bringing together public institutions like BUSD, the community college, UC Berkeley, and the City of Berkeley — a unique “public-

public partnership.” But there was little change that came out of it, in part due to the shrinking political pressure following the displacement of working-class residents of color during gentrification. Progressives can still be managerialist, espousing support and even working towards social change, while maintaining the belief that White and professional norms and cultural capital make them the experts at the expense of excluding families with the most at stake in district reform.

Urban regimes (Stone, 1989, 2009), and education regimes (Henig et al., 2001) in particular, provide insight into the tensions around compromise and sociopolitical change. These governing arrangements reflect on the ways that community and elite stakeholders mobilize to influence education agendas, as well as how the power held by local elites can be difficult to permeate because of their connections to external political actors at various scales of government and into the private sector. My work contributes to the literature on regimes by considering two underexplored areas: *regime evolution* and *regime cooptation*. Both school districts in Berkeley and Oakland underwent changes in their governing regimes across two decades, 1999-2019, which shed light on context-specific examples of neoliberal translations and refusals (Wilkins, 2018). In Oakland, the portfolio regime normalized privatization and advanced the portfolio strategy through symbolic forms of engagement, serving as the key link between state takeover and district redesign thanks to a national network of neoliberal edu-preneurs familiar with redefining a new local terrain. Berkeley’s civic regime was buffered from these politics and created a very different dynamic, where local ideas and strategies could flourish within the public sphere. However, this came with a cost of White liberal dominance and complacency.

Another theoretical contribution of this comparative analysis is the distinction between a *politics of contestation* versus a *politics of complacency* around the educational conditions of marginalized youth the district is supposed to serve, along with the opportunities and contradictions of non-profit organizations in serving as conduits of democratic participation. These cases illuminate critical lessons in mobilizations and regimes as one community is sick and tired of reform under times of crisis while another is almost searching to build the political momentum to shake an unmoved system. Between the Berkeley lull and the intense conflicts in Oakland, harm and opportunity are found in both districts. They signal important points about how collaboration and contestation, or complacency and mud-slinging, shape education reform, justice, and equity in public schools. This highlights the dialectical tension around striking the right balance between strife and progress in education reform.

Questions of who governs, who is governed, and how governing works are in essence democratic dilemmas. Both cases reveal how families, students, teachers, staff, and community members strive to be a part of the decisions that affects their schools and will demand that right as a public good, including charter school parents. Historically, labor groups, advocacy groups, and parent associations have comprised the key interest groups since the mid-20th century. Today, and especially in the San Francisco Bay Area, non-profit organizations can be very influential in education reform, from mobilizing parents to lobbying elected officials. Some of the drive behind their power are very unsatisfied constituents who feel empowered by outside support and resources. The Oakland education reform scene has a myriad of external organizations, some of which have grown deeply involved in the inner-workings of the district, while Berkeley has lost most of the non-profits that once served significant Black, Latinx, and Asian populations no longer there due to gentrification and the Great Recession. In BUSD, the direct engagement has led to focusing on the family engagement office, whose staff in turn, have helped parents of color demand more space in ways that advocacy groups used to do. Some parents and staff still express frustration with the traditional district engagement committees, but others have felt empowered with the equity-focused changes to central office. In Oakland, organizations like OCO and now GO Public Schools, are

supposed to “hold the district accountable” but are themselves held accountable to the venture philanthropists that fund them. Considering the strengths and weakness of direct engagement versus non-profit advocacy can better amplify marginalized voices through a critical analysis of how funders can undermine democracy.

History has shown that democracy is threatened under political and financial crisis. Through assemblage theory, we understand that education governance involves “contingent assembly work” (Higgins and Lerner 2017, p. 5), which requires researchers to call attention to how “particular relations are held stable, fall apart, are contested and are reassembled” (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 180; Wilkins, 2018, p. 23). Moreover, a Gramscian analysis helps distinguish between the coercive “war of maneuver” tactics and consent-making through the “war of position” (Gramsci, 1971). Fiscal audits serve as surveillance of poor urban districts that are ultimately punished for disinvestment. As a parastatal agency, FCMAT is a key actor in the coercive side of hegemony, wielding crisis-ridden contexts to propel privatization in the name of efficiency. Each case represented different facets of neoliberal surveillance: Oakland was a key site for neoliberal experimentation whereas Berkeley has more insidious forms of privatization via testing and parent fundraising. However, most of the privatization took place through manufacturing consent from the public through engaging local stakeholders in symbolic ways that sometimes felt meaningful and other times were demeaning, as perceived by the students, educators, and teachers. However, both cases also pointed to counter-hegemonic struggles (Sum, 2005) where local actors took part in neoliberal refusals rather than a straightforward translation of hegemony.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

In line with the tradition of the politics of education scholarship, a key argument of this study is that politics need to change in order to shift the policy context. With that in mind, there are a few key ways that this research speaks to policy and practice in education. First, education finance begins with tax reform. The problems over the last four decades caused by Proposition 13, as detailed in Chapter 5, reveals the growing public discontent with corporations not paying their share by only paying property taxes at the 1978 market-rate value. Tax reform around this Proposition 13 alone would bring millions of dollars into public schools and other public services like libraries. However, there are deeper, long-held issues with funding public schools based on property taxes, which puts urban (and some rural) districts at a disadvantage, and thus relying on private funding through philanthropies or parent fundraising to make up the difference. Looking to models (e.g., Massachusetts and Vermont in the 1990s) where state-level funding has been increased and redistributed across local public school districts is one potential model to more equitable and adequate funding (Baker et al., 2020).

At the district level, administrators and board members should focus on creating needs assessments and impact assessments to inform their decisions around opening and closing schools, both district and charter. As my work details, in addition to previous research and many anecdotal accounts over the past two decades, opening a new school, typically a charter school, has a ripple effect on the entire neighborhood as well as the district schools it is unintentionally in competition with amid an increasingly market-oriented education landscape. Impact assessments would project the potential issues and conflicts around enrollment, a major issue for many districts, that could stave off the devastating effects of school closures on the communities. Ideally in collaboration with school communities, needs assessments reveal the practitioners, leaders, and families’ perspectives on not only what they need, but what they value from their public schools. Test scores are one of many indicators of a “good” school, whether that be defined by academic rigor, equity, or economic mobility. And as my works finds, even academically strong schools are closed by district leadership on the basis of under-enrollment. Some advocates argue that these issues are supposed to be

addressed by policies within the portfolio strategy. However, my study finds that the constant churn of closures and openings in Oakland's portfolio strategy further destabilized a vulnerable district community. Furthermore, districts have limited provision over charter schools because of state charter laws. There have been growing calls to reform charter laws, as detailed in each of the findings chapters, even among charter-friendly district leaders who have since witnessed the disruption of mismanagement affecting their constituents.

Grassroots organizing is foundational to building political will and momentum around targeted policy ideas. This has been done more successfully in the market-based education reform movement, but there has been growing coordination among public education activists over the last decade. It is important for organizers and non-profit staff to interrogate the impact of philanthropic funding by considering the strings attached to narrow outcomes and the potential for cooptation of more progressive aims. In regards to more formal mechanisms for democratic participation and governance, community engagement is key to building trust between stakeholders and district leaders – or fueling mistrust. Berkeley demonstrates a strong participatory decision-making process in each school, while Oakland considers equity and underrepresented communities in their district-wide approach. Other districts can learn from the strengths and limitation of each place. Relatedly, a major challenge, and arguably threat, to democracy is the 2010 Citizens United ruling that radically altered the campaign finance reform landscape by allowing corporations and outside groups to spend unlimited money on elections. There is a stark difference between the hundreds of thousands of dollars poured into the Oakland school board races and Berkeley's modest spending thanks to their local campaign laws.

My dissertation points to four areas where future scholarship would benefit from deeper attention and analysis. First, my research indicates that there needs to be a deeper focus on the relationship between district gentrification by examining how the housing market shapes the privatization of district facilities. Second, future research should explore the role of parastate agencies, like the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), across states. Third, a focus on district-managed engagement alone neglects the many ways in which political strategies take form. Hence, the importance of social movements, particularly in the context of increased policing. Fourth, it would be pertinent for research to delve deeper into the creation of design labs, and the role of venture capitalist firms like the NewSchools Venture Fund that focus on coalescing and coordinating emergent networks of intermediaries.

Political Possibilities: Within and Beyond Policy Options

“Governance therefore is underpinned by decisions and judgements that are framed by norms and values: ‘Implicitly or explicitly, governance means choosing between them’”
(Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009, p. 818; Wilkins & Olmedo, 2019, p. 4)

This is a study of political possibilities, and why some policies become the only option on the table. What ideas and demands are obscured, why, and by whom? Where can district policies push the boundaries of educational equity through governance reform? Today's era of late neoliberalism demands a return to select government provision to remedy the consequences of unregulated market-based policies -- this “third way” of governance is exemplified at the local level through portfolio districts (Ball, 2012). Neoliberalism, as evidenced in district governance reform, is not stagnant. The changing ideas and technologies of governing coalitions reveal future directions for the neoliberal state and political economy. Policy resistance is one part of that. Exploring how community stakeholders navigate public-private partnerships can shed light on advocacy and

resistance in district reform, thus illuminating the possibilities for educational justice within or beyond the neoliberal political economy.

There are two strands of research that frame district reform and improvement, which sometimes coincide with political camps. The first argues political economic factors determine what districts have to work with and the second is that reorganization will tinker our way to change. A smaller strand looks at micropolitics and power-building, but unclear to what ends. I argue that our conceptualization of governance needs to be expanded to better situate the district as the lever of change — one moving towards justice and educational opportunity — requires an understanding of the interrelated political economic factors that community and elite stakeholders negotiate through local politics. It is a dialectical relationship between the structural conditions and inter-personal alliances that define each vision of public education.

Crisis brings to the fore competing theories: cracks in the hegemonic paradigm of neoliberalism means that there is a space for alternatives through counter-hegemonic strategies. The resistance to economic instability, public health crises, and police brutality characterizing the current political moment motions towards future possibilities of a just society. Education activism, such as the ones in Oakland around reopening schools under a pandemic and eliminating the school police reveal the key continuities, contradictions, and fissures in the hegemony of market-oriented education reforms. We are on the cusp of social change, and urban school districts are one context for understanding the local challenges and policy dilemmas of deepening democratic governance under growing privatization.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Interview Protocol

Background

1. Introductions, logistics

I am conducting dissertation research on how the [Berkeley Unified/Oakland Unified] School District builds its capacity to create quality schools through partnerships with agencies and individuals outside of the district, while maintaining a focus on equity. The study also explores how the city's history has shaped its current school system. In particular, I aim to understand how community members navigate the city's current political climate and its school district in order to advocate for their needs and the needs of others.

I hope that the insights I learn from this study can provide practical lessons for district and charter school leaders, education reformers, and policymakers that will enhance their approaches to equity-minded advocacy and community engagement for all students.

2. I'm interested in learning about your background. Can you tell me about where you grew up?

- a. How long was your family in [city]?
- a. What were your school experiences like? What did your schools look like?

3. How long have you lived in [city]?

- a. What work have you been involved in here, professionally/personally?

4. What are your connections to the district?

- a. What motivated you to get involved in education/educational issues?

Organizational/Institutional Affiliation

Now, I'd like to hear more about how you've been more formally connected to the district.

5. How did you get involved with [organization/institution name]?

6. In what ways has your organization collaborated with/supported the district?

7. What other organizations have you worked with on education reform?

8. What ideals, goals, or aims guide your organizational efforts?

District Context

Now I want to talk to you about what has been happening in district more generally.

9. When you think about the district in your time here, what have been the major highs and lows for the district?

- a. What in your opinion are barriers for progress in the district?
 - i. (If not clear) What does progress look like?
- b. [If brought up] Why do you think the district faces financial issues?

Issues & initiatives

Oakland

- Have you heard this term some people use to call "portfolio model/district"?

- When you heard that used, what did that mean to you?
- Are community members aware of this term/idea?
- Have you seen how communities of color respond to this kind of district?

Berkeley

- Integration plans
- Vision 2020 – next steps
- Why do you think Berkeley has a low number of charter schools?
- Address verification work
- Standardized tests and the achievement gap
- Parcel taxes and facilities work
- Teacher pay and housing

Partnerships

Now I want to focus on partnerships. Reform doesn't just happen inside the district or only outside; it's about joining efforts. Some people call those public-private partnerships, or just partnerships. I just want to think about the partnerships that exist in Berkeley education.

10. Public-private partnerships have been a key part of many urban districts. Have you seen examples of this kind of collaboration in Berkeley's schools?
 - a. What opportunities do district public-private partnerships provide?
11. Okay, let's talk about money; I want to hear your take on it. In your opinion, how can the district improve funding streams?
 - a. There is a lot of talk about alternative funding streams. What is your take on alternative funding sources (foundation, business support, PTA/school/district fundraiser)?
12. In what ways, if any, have you seen the District partner with the District?
 - a. What role do you think the Mayor's Office should play in the [city] schools?
 - b. Do you see any dynamics in the city of [name] that are reflected in the district?

Power

13. Who are the major "movers and shakers" in the Berkeley schools?
14. Do you see anyone left out of the district's major decision-making? Who?
15. How would you describe the role that Berkeley's school board has played in the district?
16. What are important points to consider during a superintendent search?
 - a. Are you involved in the process?
 - b. *[If discussed]* why was the search contentious?
17. In what ways, if any, have you seen BUSD engage the community?
18. In what ways, if any, have you seen the community engage the district?
 - a. What issues did the engagement revolve around?
 - b. Were there efforts that got in the way?

Other Questions

19. The East Bay is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the country. In what ways have you seen race be an issue in the district?

a. What do the relations between the African American and Latino communities look like, from your standpoint?

20. I want to talk about this trend towards gentrification; it's a hot topic. Do you think some of these gentrification efforts are having an effect on the public schools? If so how?

a. Do you know if the district is doing anything in response to these gentrification efforts?

b. In your opinion, in what ways do you think this might impact district finances?

21. How do you think the district is doing right now?

22. What are your thoughts on the current strategic plan?

Appendix B: Codebook Overview

Comparative

Individual Positionality (IP)

- IP_familial
- IP_educational
- IP_ethnoracial
- IP_social class
- IP_professional
- IP_social activism
- IP_sexual orientation
- IP_Gender

Stakeholders (Stake)

- Stake_students
- Stake_teachers
- Stake_CMO
- Stake_School Board
- Stake_CBO
- Stake_families/parents
- Stake_foundations
- Stake_policy makers
- Stake_Central office staff
- Stake_Superintendent
- Stake_Advocacy_Other
- Stake_ERA0
- Stake_Union
- Stake_Principal
- Stake_State
- Stake_County
- Stake_Elected Officials
- Stake_Think Tank
- Stake_Community member
- Stake_Federal?

Ideologies (Id)

- Id_Other
- ID_neoliberal
- Id_Social change/social justice
- Id_CritRef
- Id_EdEquity
- ID_Democracy&Engagement

City Context (CC)

- CC_Sociopolitical history
- CC_Geography
- CC_Demography
- CC_Other

District Initiatives (DI)

- DI_Blueprint for Quality Schools
- DI_Oakland Promise
- DI_Equity Pledge
- DI_Expect Success
- DI_Small Schools
- DI_Charter Schools
- DI_RJ
- DI_Closures & Turnaround
- DI_AAMI/Office of Equity
- DI_Open Enrollment
- DI_Budget cuts
- DI_Desegregation
- DI_LCFF
- DI_Vision 2020
- DI_Universal 9
- DI_Teachers strike
- DI_Other
- DI_Quality School Development/ISS
- DI_State Receivership
- DI_Tracking & Tiering

District Politics (Pol)

- Pol_Stability vs. Turnover
- Pol_Surveillance vs. Autonomy
- Pol_Trust vs. Mistrust
- Pol_Contestation vs. Complacency
- Pol_Centralized vs. Decentralized
- Pol_Bureaucracy vs. Experimentation
- Pol_Municipal Gov
- Pol_Board Elections
- Pol_Race
- Pol_Poverty & SES
- Pol_Local vs. Outsider
- Pol_# of Staff, Students, & Schools
- Pol_Collaboration vs. Competition
- Pol_Dysfunction vs. Efficiency

Democratic Engagement (Dem)

- Dem_Decision-making authority
- Dem_Transparency+Communication
- Dem_Representation
- Dem_Electoral
- Dem_Strategy
 - >formal
 - >informal
- Dem_Responsiveness vs. Discipline

Urban Regime Analysis (URA)

URA_Portfolio Regime
URA_Civic Regime
URA_Goals
URA_Strategy
URA_Coalitions
URA_Messaging
URA_Resistance

Political Economy (PE)

PE_Neoliberalism
PE_Austerity
PE_Keynesian Welfarism
PE_Deindustrialization
PE_Great Recession
PE_Gentrification
PE_Wealth Inequality
PE_Taxes
PE_Labor Market
PE_Great Recession

Governance (Gov)

Gov_P3s/Public-Private Partnerships
Gov_Privatization_Other
Gov_PMM
Gov_Provision
Gov_Power/access
Gov_Consulting/Consultants
Gov_Funding/Finance
Gov_Intergovernmental relations (IGR)
Gov_Intermediary Org/technical assist.
Gov_Facilities
Gov_Policymaking
Gov_Structure & Redesign

School-Community Dynamics (Com)

Com_School culture
Com_Student Achievement
Com_Staff
Com_Resources
Com_Community Connection

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