

Leading for Urban School Reform and Community Development

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Abstract

Purpose: Improving urban schools of color and the communities where they are located requires leadership that spans school and community boundaries. The purpose of this study is to understand how principal and community leader actions support urban school reform along with community development at two community schools in the urban Midwest and Southeast. **Research Method:** Using a cross-case study design, this research draws on interviews, school–community observations, and document analysis. Concepts from community development leadership and cross-boundary leadership are joined to theoretically frame this study and guide the analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative method. **Findings:** Leader actions varied across the two research sites based on the specific school–community tasks that were undertaken. However, cross-case findings suggest that leaders developed a broad vision for school and community, positioned the school as a spatial community asset, championed community causes at the school, and changed school culture. **Implications:** This approach to educational leadership highlights principals who purposefully work with community leaders toward mutually beneficial school and community outcomes. The study concludes with implications for leadership practice and future research.

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Racial and structural inequity, and more recently, post–Great Recession hardships have considerably constrained low-income, urban¹ communities of color and the schools located within them. Given this, Warren (2005) argues, “The fates of urban schools and communities are linked, yet school reformers and community-builders typically act as if they are not” (p. 133). Equitably improving urban schools and communities, therefore, requires broad-based leadership that can bridge the chasm between urban school reform and community development (McKoy, Vincent, & Bierbaum, 2011).

Over the past two decades, researchers have studied urban school reform and community development across K-12 levels (Crowson & Boyd, 2001; Keith, 1996; Noguera, 1996; Patterson & Silverman, 2013; Taylor, 2005; Warren, 2005). In much of this research, scholars have linked urban school outcomes with local community conditions. Researchers have also examined urban school reform in light of community inequality to underscore how structural forces such as systemic racism, deindustrialization, and economic inequity influence urban schools and communities (Anyon, 1997, 2005a, 2005b; Berliner, 2006; Tate, 2012).

Situating educational leadership within these bodies of research, scholars have investigated the role of principals in school–community relations (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Stovall, 2004). Scholars have also analyzed the role of community leaders in urban school reforms (Miller, Brown, & Hopson, 2011; Warren, 2005) as well as cross-boundary leadership, which connects schools, communities, and leadership (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Alemán, Pérez-Torres, & Oliva, 2013; Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006; Jean-Marie & Curry, 2012). However, researchers have given less attention to the ways that educational leaders take action to improve outcomes across urban schools and their community-based context.

The purpose and central inquiry of this study is to understand how principal and community leader actions support urban high school reform along with community development at two community schools² in the urban Midwest and Southeast. In this study, community leader(s) are individuals who hold formal positions in neighborhood-based organizations and have a contextual knowledge of the community (Miller, 2011; Pigg, 1999).³ The significance of this study is supported by research that suggests urban school

districts and leaders have struggled to improve schools apart from community development initiatives (Warren, 2005). In what follows, I review scholarly literature that informs this study. I then explain this study's conceptual framework, and describe the methods and cross-case findings. Finally, I offer implications for leadership practice and future research.

Literature Review

To situate this study, I review literature on (a) urban high school reform, (b) research that links urban school reform and community development, (c) research on principals and community involvement, and (d) community development research. Within each literature strand, I discuss key research findings and limitations as it relates to this study.

Urban High School Reform

For the past six decades, urban high schools have undergone countless reforms and remain a persistent concern in education research and practice. Such concerns include tracked and unequal programs, irrelevant curricula, overcrowded classrooms, underexperienced teachers, and a "factory model" organizational structure (Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Darling-Hammond, Aness, & Ort, 2002; Gonsalves & Leonard, 2007; Payne, 2008). However, a main concern in urban high schools is inequitable graduation rates based on race and social class (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Legters, 2002). In their seminal study that located high schools with the highest dropout rates, Balfanz and Legters (2004) found that Black⁴ and Latino/a children more often attend high schools where less than 50% of students graduate. Research similarly indicates that White students from affluent, suburban high schools graduate at significantly higher rates than students of color from low-income, urban high schools (Legters, 2002; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

A review of literature shows that a standards-based accountability context has further influenced urban high school reforms. To meet accountability standards, most urban high school reforms aim to (a) increase rigor in assessments (Mac Iver, 2007), (b) strengthen programmatic and organizational structures (Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Patterson, Belyukova, Berman, & Francis, 2007; Rodriguez, 2008), (c) reduce school and classroom sizes (Cotton, 2001; Noguera, 2002), (d) increase the quality of instruction (Legters, 2002; Louis & Miles, 1990; Peters, 2011), (e) change school culture (Antrop-González, 2006; Fine, 1994; Legters, 2002), and (f) create a college-going culture (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). Though these school-based efforts are important, they do little to directly address the out-of-school

factors that affect students' lives beyond the school's four walls (Green & Gooden, 2014; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

In addition, research indicates that out-of-school factors, such as institutional racism, spatial inequality, and concentrated poverty shape urban high schools and communities (Anyon, 1997; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Despite the influence of such out-of-school factors, most urban high school reforms ignore these concerns, as educational policies have not addressed the ways these factors affect student learning and development (Green & Gooden, 2014; Milner, 2013; Noguera & Wells, 2011). Therefore, scholars link school reform and community development to address such concerns in low-income, urban communities of color.

Urban School Reform and Community Development

Scholars who advocate for linking urban school reform with community development combine student outcomes with broader community change (Miron, 1995; Noguera, 1996; Patterson & Silverman, 2013; Scanlan & Miller, 2013; Taylor, 2005; Warren, 2005). For example, Keith (1996) advances a three-tier community development model for schools. The model places community agency, networks, and interests at the center instead of perceived community deficits and needs. The model then forges linkages between community groups and establishes community-determined tasks, and aims to improve communities through democratic participation and collective action. Finally, outside experts are invited to support community-driven efforts. While Keith's model makes a substantive contribution to the literature, it focuses less on how school principals take action within the model.

To espouse a new view of urban education reform, Warren (2005) examined four case studies that illustrated robust collaborations between urban schools and community-based organizations. Across the case studies, Warren contended that each model sought to develop new, stronger, and more collaborative ties with community members, parents, and teachers. In building these collaborative ties, Warren's findings suggest that community organizations are central to developing social capital between schools and communities, and issues of unequal power dynamics must be addressed when community groups collaborate with urban schools (see also Warren, 1998).

Additionally, scholars offer several reasons for combining urban school reform and community development. First, researchers assert that community development is critical to making urban school reform sustainable (Noguera, 1996; Silverman, 2013; Taylor, 2005). As Warren (2005) compellingly argues, ". . . if urban school reform in the United States is to be

successful, it must be linked to the revitalization of the communities around the schools” (p. 133). Second, research indicates that urban schools alone cannot address the multifaceted forms of community inequality that affect student outcomes (Berliner, 2006; Miller et al., 2011; Noguera & Wells, 2011; Taylor, McGlynn, & Luter, 2013). Third, inequitable community conditions in housing, health care, safety, and nutrition present challenges to student learning that necessitate community-based support (Horsford & Sampson, 2014; Noguera, 1996; Warren, 2005).

Principals and Community Involvement

Research indicates that principals play an important role in forging robust connections between schools and their local communities (Auerbach, 2010; Epstein, 2001; Gooden, 2005; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012), especially between families, teachers, and community members (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ishimaru, 2013; Lopez, Harvey, & Chesnut, 2013). Traditionally, principals’ involvement with local communities has focused on hosting open house meetings, parent–teacher conferences, and engaging in two-way communication with a range of community partners (Sanders, 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). However, Ishimaru (2013) found that principals could take on more innovative forms of community involvement, such as becoming community organizers through partnering with community-based organizations to share leadership with parents of color from low-income backgrounds. In establishing durable links between schools and communities, Stovall (2004) argues that principals who work successfully and equitably with the community operate as a negotiator, make community-based resource available for students and teachers, and position the school as a community space for local residents.

More specifically, educational leadership that links schooling with notions of community development was a common practice for Black principals during the pre-*Brown v. Board* era (Dantley, 2005; Horsford, 2010; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1989; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2000; Tillman, 2004), as they led community empowerment efforts and garnered collective action for key community issues (Rodgers, 1967). With this understanding, Khalifa (2012) contends that current school principals should serve as community leaders and advocate for equity-centered issues that are relevant to the community. He found that an African American principal who was successful in doing this conducted weekly home visits, spoke at community engagements, and spent time discussing and working on noneducation issues with community stakeholders.

Additionally, principals can support school reforms that affect local communities. Goldring and Hausman (2001) argue that these principals exercise civic capacity, which is the building of coalitions to address community-wide concerns. Crowson and Boyd (2001) similarly assert these principals develop a sense of place through making investments in families and partnering with local institutions (e.g., banks, libraries, places of worship, universities, community associations).

Community Development

Research on community development has roots in sociology, social work, urban planning, and other fields of study. As a result, the term has multiple definitions in the literature, and a major misconception is that community development is an increased quantitative outcome, such as more jobs, homes, and population⁵ (G. Green & Haines, 2012). Rather, sociologists Gary Green and Anna Haines (2012) define community development as “involve[ing] structural changes in the community, especially in how resources are used, [and] the functioning of institutions, and the distribution of resources” (pp. 4-5). Scholars, thus, delineate seven forms of community assets that are essential in community development efforts, including human, spatial, financial, political, cultural, environmental, and social (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Education researchers have also offered definitions for community development. Schutz (2006) described community development as “an umbrella term that encompasses a range of social, economic, housing, educational, and other programs designed to support community rebuilding” (p. 722). Goldring and Hausman (2001) note community development “. . . changes the core identity from isolated, independent agencies to institutions enmeshed with other community agencies in an interconnected landscape of supports for the well being of students and learners” (p.195).

Additionally, the principles of “task” and “process” are salient across nearly all notions of community development (Lyon & Driskell, 2011). Task describes tangible goals like building a new school or hospital and process describes abstract goals such as strengthening community ties and local autonomy. Both task and process must occur for community development to take place. Drawing on the previously discussed definitions, in this study, community development means changes in how community institutions function and how community resources are used to achieve a particular school–community task in which the process strengthens community ties (Green & Haines, 2012; Lyon & Driskell, 2011).

Moreover, a review of literature reveals three main approaches to community development: self-help, technical assistance, and conflict (Keith,

1996; Lyon & Driskell, 2011). In technical assistance, skilled “experts” outside the community drive community development efforts, and they often view local residents as problems to be fixed. From the self-help approach, local residents drive community development initiatives with limited external assistance. Those working from the conflict approach use community organizing and conflict as strategies for community development. However, each of these approaches is rife with strengths and limitations; thus, scholars argue that combining all three approaches is most effective (Keith, 1996).

The literature also shows that community development initiatives have vacillated between people and place-based strategies. However, more innovative notions of community development consider a hybrid approach that aims to “. . . transform places and support individuals, families, and students who live and learn in those places” (McKoy et al., 2011, p. 2). The hybrid forms of community development also seek to build inclusive, sustainable, and opportunity-rich communities (McKoy et al., 2011). In sum, while scholars advocate for linking urban school reform and community development, these types of reforms are still underutilized at the secondary level. In addition, this literature review notes that research that links urban school reform and community development has given less attention to the role that principals and community leaders play in supporting these reforms.⁶ This study, therefore, aims to address these gaps with implications for practice and future research.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in a conceptual framework that draws on concepts from community development leadership (CDL; Rubin, 1994) and cross-boundary leadership (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Miller, 2007, 2008). I fuse these concepts to examine how educational leaders work toward urban school reform and community development. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model and the relationship between the perspectives.

Community Development Leadership

CDL is based on research with leaders at community-based development organizations (Rubin, 1994).⁷ As such, CDL is rooted in a theory of equitable community change that aims to transform place (i.e., community) and support the people in the place. Rubin (1994) articulated the perspective and delineates four precepts of CDL. First, community development leaders recognize the political context of their work and understand how social systems inequitably stratify communities by race and class. These leaders are, there-

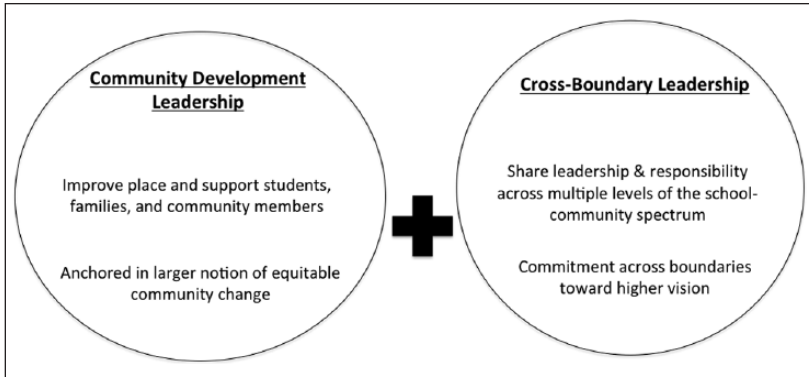


Figure 1. Illustration of conceptual framework.

fore, reluctant to accept market-based solutions and programs that only benefit a few individuals in a community, such as school and housing vouchers.

Second, these leaders use theory to inform their decisions, especially about how to navigate external pressures that try to constrain the function of their organizations. Third, community development leaders pursue solidarity with community stakeholders to reimagine what communities could and should be. Fourth, these leaders view inequality as the results of interconnected systems that must be addressed holistically. For instance, community development leaders view underresourced schools and unemployment as systemic inequity.

CDL is applicable to educational leadership, especially principal leadership. Principals operating from a CDL perspective would ground their practice in a theory of equitable community transformation that addresses the multiple layers of community inequity. These leaders would also work collectively with community stakeholders to create school–community goals that support students, families, and the community.

Cross-Boundary Leadership in Education Leadership

Cross-boundary leadership (CBL) or boundary spanning leadership is “the ability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across boundaries in service of a higher goal or vision” (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010; Ernst & Yip, 2009). CBL, a conceptual import from business management literature, has been used in education research to represent leadership that spans school and community boundaries. In the field of educational leadership, Miller (2008) broadly defines cross-boundary leaders as those who strategically permeate diverse

organizational boundaries and diffuse leadership to guide joint action. Scholars have examined cross-boundary leadership as it relates to principals (Goldring, 1996; Rallis & Goldring, 2000), superintendents (Wills & Peterson, 1992), community schools (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Jean-Marie, Ruffin, & Burr, 2010), and community leaders (Miller, 2007, 2008). Research shows that cross-boundary leaders (a) understand that silo[ed] leadership is insufficient for tackling urban school and community challenges, (b) leverage networks and serve as bridges between community organizations, and (c) position the school as a central community institution (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Miller, 2007, 2008).

A key concept in cross-boundary leadership is multiple levels of leadership. In community schools, cross-boundary leaders operate across three key levels. These levels include leaders on the ground (e.g., administrators, teachers, and community members), leaders in the middle (e.g., school–community directors and coordinators), and leaders in local communities (e.g., civic and business leaders; Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Blank et al., 2006). These multiple levels of leadership account for the demands placed on principals, especially in high-stakes accountability contexts and expand notions of educational leadership beyond the school’s four walls.

Moreover, an important precept of CBL is achieving a broad school–community vision. Another essential precept of CBL is shared responsibility and influence. As Adams and Jean-Marie (2011) posit, “Cross-boundary leadership is not defined by new leadership structures and process, [but] . . . by culture of shared influence and collective responsibility . . .” (p. 356). Particularly, in community schools, cross-boundary leadership rests on structural elements and normative conditions (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). The structural elements describe school–community directors and the school’s site team that function as liaisons to connect school and community stakeholders. Normative conditions refer to a culture of shared responsibility and influence between school and community groups (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011).

To this end, this conceptual framework draws on CDL to examine how leaders work to equitably improve the community and support students, families, and community members. The conceptual framework uses cross-boundary leadership to analyze how local actors share leadership and responsibility across multiple levels of the school–community spectrum toward a higher vision.

Method

This cross-case qualitative design draws on interviews, observations, documents, and detailed field notes. In this section, I discuss site selection criteria, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Site Selection

Given this study's purpose, I sought to conduct research with schools where reform was occurring in concert with community development. I also sought schools where principals worked collaboratively with community leaders to improve school and community outcomes. Thus, schools for this study met the following criteria: (a) public, urban high school, (b) predominantly populated with students of color from low-income backgrounds, and (c) explicitly working on school reform and community initiatives (e.g., development, partnerships, etc.). Using purposeful and network sampling (Creswell, 2012), I contacted the Coalition for Community Schools⁸ because of their work with schools and communities. Per my selection criteria, a mid-level researcher in the organization identified 10 potential schools for this study. However, six of the schools were elementary and/or middle schools. Of the remaining four schools, he recommended Garvey⁹ and Woodson High Schools because both schools aligned most closely to my selection criteria and both sites were nationally recognized for their school-community work. I discuss both schools and communities below in this article.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred at several school–community spaces. These spaces include the two urban high schools, community centers, a local university, local restaurants, and at participants' homes.

Interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews with urban high school principals (former and current), assistant principals, local university leaders, community leaders (e.g., neighborhood center directors), school counselors, school–community directors, teachers, a school board member, and a police officer—43 total interviews (see Table 1). I, however, centrally draw on interviews with 13 school and community leaders (e.g., principals, community center directors, leaders from State University, and school–community directors) and use the other 30 interviews to further flesh out the findings. These 13 participants' perspectives were purposefully centered because they are either principals, held formal leadership positions within the community, and were identified as the most actively involved in the school reform and community development work.

All interviews were digitally recorded, and I asked interview questions that focused on (a) what the school and community was like prior to the reform, (b) how the school reform and community development work began,

Table 1. Participants' Profiles.

Name	Leadership Position	Organization	Research Site (Location Number)
Oscar Hamilton	Former principal	School	Woodson (2)
Jody	Parent and community engagement specialist	School/community	Woodson (2)
Mrs. Williams	Teacher	School/community	Woodson (2)
Juanita	Assistant principal	School	Woodson (2)
Ann	Community leader	Local business	Woodson (2)
Brenda	Former principal (2000-2006)	School	Garvey (1)
Brad	Former principal (2006-2009)	School	Garvey (1)
Sharon	Former principal (2009-)	School	Garvey (1)
Nancy	Community leader	Local university	Garvey (1)
Vinnie	Community director	School	Garvey (1)
Vikki	Community leader	King Community Center, Director	Garvey (1)
Dr. Charles	Community leader	Coretta community center, Director	Garvey (1)
Lois	Community partner	State university	Garvey (1)

(c) how the school reform affected the local community, and (d) the actions that the principals and community leaders took to support the work. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. I conducted between one and three interviews, per participant.

Observations and document analysis. Observations for this study lasted between 30 and 200 minutes and provided another perspective about the participants' leadership and research site context. I conducted observations in various settings such as Community Advisory Meetings with the principal, community leaders, and other school leaders. I also observed a school open house meeting and various school–community meetings with administrators and community stakeholders. Additionally, I examined documents such as State Department of Education achievement data, district accountability reports, school and community meeting notes and agendas, newspaper articles on the schools, internal reports from three community centers, and national publications about the schools.

Data Analysis, Limitations, and Trustworthiness

To analyze the data, in the initial phase, I transcribed interviews and field notes, and noted all principal and community leader actions for supporting school reform along with community development. In the second phase, I assigned each action a descriptive code and organized codes into similar categories to create axial codes as a means to identify relationships between them (Creswell, 2012). For the third phase, I arranged the leader actions into larger conceptual themes and used the constant comparative method to test the emerging categories throughout the data analysis. Finally, I analyzed the emerging findings against the conceptual framework's tenets until saturation occurred.

This study has several limitations. First, this study mainly focuses on school and community leader perspectives. While these viewpoints are valuable, students, parents, and community member voices are absent from this study. These perspectives, however, are not intended to speak for the entire school or community, but serve as a representative sample. Second, this study's sample presents limitations, because I focused on outlier cases where there was some degree of success with urban school reform and community development. Third, case studies from two regions of the United States do not generalize to all urban school settings, but these school-community contexts are typical of many low-income, urban communities of color that have been affected by larger out-of-school factors. Therefore, these cases offer descriptive representative samples of locations where urban school reform and community development may occur.

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

Context for the Study

Marcus Garvey Community High School (Garvey). Garvey High School is located in the urban Midwest. In the early 1970s, a court-ordered school desegregation busing decision disrupted the school's connection to the community. As a result, academic achievement began to wane at Garvey and the district lost students, teachers, and fiscal resources for the next two decades. By the mid 1990s, the impacts of the busing decision and deindustrialization

on the community reached a zenith. Many manufacturing jobs left the community, which reduced the local tax base that supported Garvey.

In 1995, the district closed Garvey and all other public schools in the community. However, in 2000, after being closed for 5 years, with strong community leadership, particularly from the three community centers and State University,¹⁰ Garvey reopened as a 7th- to 12th-grade university-assisted, full-service community school. Demographic data from 2012 revealed that 80% of students were eligible for free and/or reduced lunch, 21.7% received special education services, and 16.9% were linguistically diverse students. The school's racial demographics were 34% White, 31% Latino/a, 30% African American, and 5% multiracial, which mirrored the community's demographics.

Community context. Garvey is located in the King neighborhood, a tight knit low to working-class community. Next to the King neighborhood are two racially, culturally, and socioeconomically distinct neighborhoods where Garvey also draws students—the Coretta and Betty neighborhoods. The three neighborhoods have approximately 14,000 residents and serve roughly 4,000 students. Located in the each neighborhood are community centers that serve as anchor institutions. Moreover, in 2012, the community's racial demographics were 32% African American, 31% Latino/a, 31% White, and 6% mix-raced. Only 7.4% of neighborhood members have any type of college degree and only 66% of neighborhood residents 18 years and older have obtained a high school diploma.

Carter G. Woodson High School (WHS). WHS is located in the urban Southwest. By the early 2000, the school served students from over 50 countries and was known as a low-performing school. The school and community also experienced excessive gang activity to the point that police helicopters were present during school dismissal. In 2006, WHS hit rock bottom when gang members walked into the school and beat a student severely. WHS also had some of the lowest graduation rates, weak school–community connections, and pervasive student and neighborhood health problems because of a lack of access to health care. By 2012, student racial demographics were 40% Latino/a, 25% African American, 25% White, and 10% Asian. Eighty percent of students were eligible for free and/or reduced lunch.

Community context. WHS is located in one of the most racially diverse neighborhoods in the state, which is reflected in the school's demographics. The community is home to large immigrant populations, such as Kurdish, Egyptians, Somalis, and Sudanese. Community racial demographics are 40% of

color and 60% White, which disaggregates to 20% African American, 15% Latino/a and Asian American, and 5% multiracial. In the next section, I discuss the findings for this study.

Findings

In this section, I illustrate how the leaders in both cases supported urban high school reform along with community development, as defined in this study. In doing so, the leaders took several actions, including developing a broad vision for school and community, positioning the school as a spatial community asset, championing community causes at the school, and changing school culture. I begin with discussing the findings at Garvey High School.

The Case of Garvey High School

Developing a broad vision for the school and community. The impacts of closing Garvey and its feeder schools for 5 years were felt on many levels across the community. As Lois, a community leader from State University described, “You saw the crumble, like an urban crumble in the neighborhood. Businesses closed, schools closed . . . When Garvey closed, a lot of things around it closed, too. It was detrimental to the neighborhood!” Therefore, to counter the effects of having zero public schools, leaders from across the community, especially from the three community centers and State University were instrumental in developing a broad vision around education, families, and community. As the leaders worked to reopen Garvey as a community school, Vinnie, the school–community director described the vision:

To create a community school where children and their families can be successful so children can graduate from high school, and go to college, and families can be successful and neighborhoods can be strengthened. It was a holistic approach.

These leaders held a larger, inclusive school–community vision that linked education and neighborhoods.

Brenda, the principal who reopened Garvey shared similar sentiments as she described part of the larger vision as, “. . . we need[ed] to improve the communities that students live in.” Community leaders also shared a vision that included an educationally robust Garvey High School along with larger community change, particularly so that students could graduate and return to the community. Vikki, the director of the King Community Center and a community resident for over 4 decades, said,

The light at the end of the tunnel is . . . [to] educate young people that grow up and come back to this community. I want people to be proud to live in their neighborhood. I don't want people to grow up, go to school, and move out of this neighborhood. I want people to grow up and be a teacher and come back and teach in this neighborhood.

Vikki described an intergenerational vision that begins with having good schools that provide a quality education for students. In essence, this vision meant the school would be a critical focal point for community development. Vinnie, suggested this as he described how community supporters felt about the school, “[They] were interested in education as a tool for [community] redevelopment, because they did talk about how this was a part of a bigger picture.” Leaders inside and outside of the school, thus, shared a vision for the school and community that was foundational for guiding their subsequent work, especially situating the school as a community asset.

Positioning the school as a spatial community asset. From the outset of reopening, Garvey had strong support from leaders at the three community centers and State University. The leaders aligned, shared, and leveraged the resources within and across their networks. “It is about aligning resources and not necessarily about acquiring resources,” said Lois, a leader from State University. In sharing resources within their respective spheres of influence, the leaders made Garvey the hub of the community, and thereby a spatial community asset. Brad, a former principal at Garvey, explained the rationale for this:

In this day and age with funding problems and everything else, the community has to be involved and we have to tap into the resources of the community, and vice versa. They have to see the greater good that their partnership is going to do for students in the future . . . We have a great facility . . . [and] the community has an opportunity to engage with students and the facility.

Brad underscored the need for synergy between Garvey and the community to offset school funding constraints.

As such, the leaders made the school a spatial asset for the community in several ways (Green & Haines, 2012; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). For example, the principals at Garvey worked closely with leaders from State University to make the school's exercise facilities accessible to community members. Sharon, the principal, described,

Through a program with a community organization our weight room and athletic training areas are open to the public in the evenings. You can come for \$20 a year, and actually to a large group of people, it was free because they had

a grant. If you live in this community [then] for \$20 a year you can have a membership to our fitness area, and it is open from 4 [pm] to 7 or 8 at night.

Making the school's exercise facilities accessible to the community where some residents experienced health challenges was important because there was not another gym in the community. Sharon further explained,

The community and families can use our gym. They are not going to go join LA Fitness, because, one, there is no LA Fitness in this neighborhood. And, two, they could not afford it if it was. So for \$20 a year that is something that they can afford and they can impact the community. And, again, it is here at the school.

The leaders, thus, aimed to eliminate barriers that would prohibit community members from accessing Garvey's fitness facilities.

In addition, students from State University are trainers at Garvey's gym. As Brenda noted, "The trainers are students from State University who are practicing their trade so they come in and do an internship. So, the university uses it as an internship." Sharing responsibility with State University to make the exercise facility a community asset clearly has multiple benefits across school-community boundaries.

Garvey's swimming pool also serves as a spatial community asset, where leaders from the school and community share responsibility for its operation. Sharon noted,

Our swimming pool is run by City Parks and that has been a tremendous win-win for us. In a lot of [urban] areas schools are closing down their pools because it is a real drain on funding . . . But through our partnership [they] take care of all of the pool stuff . . . They put a climbing wall in the pool, they furnish all of our lifeguards . . . They make people available for [community] swimming lessons and for our PE classes . . . The partnership works well because it benefits both team members and it has made it more financially feasible for the school system to continue to have the pool while at the same time it is cheaper for City Parks as well.

Also, the school is open until 7 p.m. for students and their families. If students participate in the afterschool program, they can receive three hot meals a day at the school. As Sharon explained, "So if you are struggling and things are not good at home. You never have to worry about if you are going to be able to get food; it's here. It's available to them." In sum, making Garvey's pool and other school facilities a community asset illustrates CBL and CDL as multiple community institutions share responsibility for making it accessible to community

stakeholders (Green & Haines, 2012; Stovall, 2004). And in the process, community ties between the school, city, community organizations, and State University are strengthened (Warren, 1998).

Championing community concerns at the school. The school and community leaders were intentional about addressing community issues at Garvey (Khalifa, 2012). Given the economic conditions of the community, the leaders wanted to support financial literacy throughout the neighborhoods. An educator described the community's economic conditions, particularly in terms of spatial inequality as, "It has always, always, always, been one of the poorest areas of the city, but who that lowest of the lower class is changes, but they are always here." Despite these conditions, the leaders operated from asset-based perspectives. Sharon, the principal, noted, "You know "this is a very poor area of the city, but there are some incredible assets in terms of just things that people bring in and connections that we have made on so many different levels."

As such, the leaders from Garvey, the community centers, and State University made a concerted effort to promote financial literacy at the school. The leaders, thus, held several financial workshops on issues such as predatory lending practices, credit repair, and personal finance at Garvey. Vinnie, Garvey's school-community director said, "We spent a considerable amount of time with State University's help and facilitation, to offer parents and community members workshops on how to buy a house and how to manage their money." The most popular initiative that the leaders championed was an 8-week financial literacy seminar titled *Show Me The Money*, which Vinnie described,

Our most popular workshop was called *Show Me The Money*. It was all about how to manage your money [and] how to stretch your dollar. It was a very popular class, and I think it was just under 500 people who came through the course over the time that we offered it here.

The seminar was originally held at Garvey, and then moved to the community centers. Vinnie further explained,

The classes were held here at Garvey, and we did hold some of them at some of the community centers as well because we decided that we wanted to spread the classes around to make it more convenient for the families . . . It was packed! And today, because of that [workshop] all of the community centers have Centers for Working Families.¹¹

Interestingly, what started at Garvey as a pilot and an effort to address community concerns was moved to and permanently housed at community centers. During the interviews, participants indicated that as a result of the

seminar, hundreds of community members opened checking accounts, and some people even purchased homes that they had been renting for years.

Changing school culture. Changing school culture at Garvey seemed to be a critical link between school and community initiatives, especially given the importance of school culture in urban high school reforms (Antrop-González, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Legters, 2002). Together, leaders from the neighborhood centers and State University created a community-wide goal of improving graduation rates and preparing all students for college.

The community-wide goal aimed to transform the low educational attainment rates in the community that were exacerbated while Garvey was closed. Since reopening, each principal worked to align Garvey's culture with the goal. Vinnie described,

We [school leaders] joined the community, and they told us that they wanted us [the high school] to help get kids to graduate from high school and go to college

. . . The goal is to blanket our entire community with consistent high school graduation and college-going messages to provide parents and youth with relevant, engaging information, and tools for success, that are increasingly important in our global economy.

Collectively, across school and community lines, all of the leaders shared responsibility for improving graduation rates.

To do so, inside of the school, the principals at Garvey believed in the power of visual examples and personal interactions. Therefore, they along with leaders from State University created opportunities for over 100 college students to work with Garvey students on a daily basis. Sharon stated, "We have over 140 tutors per week in this building who are accessible and working with kids. The tutors are State University students. Some are from the School of Education, the School of Dentistry, and the Medical School." State University students support Garvey students with schoolwork, mentorship, and a host of other things at no cost to the school. Participants across the research site agreed that the college students' presence provide a tangible reality of what is academically possible for Garvey students and contributed to a school culture where graduation was expected. Vinnie asserted, ". . . One of the reasons that we changed into a school culture where graduation was expected because the kids saw real college students all of the time and wanted to be like them, and that was a biggie."

All the principals at Garvey took several actions to support the college-going culture. Twice per month, the principals hosted Family Nights that

included dinner, to inform students and their families about high school and college graduation. During the dinners, principals strongly encouraged parents to complete the paperwork for their child to receive scholarships that provided in-state tuition. The principals also encouraged all teachers to change their language around graduation. For example, Brad explained, “We created a culture of academic success [where] we were not going to say, ‘Are you going to college?’ [Instead] we would say, ‘Where are you going to college?’” The leaders also changed textual language in the building about graduation. Educators hung college flags, signs, and banners around their classrooms and the school building that represented the universities where they attended. Brad explained his rationale for encouraging teachers to post college flags in their classrooms:

Our kids didn’t know that they weren’t supposed to go to college. We tricked them into thinking that everybody is supposed to go to college. So, we had our teachers do things like put their college flags up in their rooms and on their walls to let them [students] know that I am, for example, Mr. [Javon] from State University. Things like that to where we created a culture of academic success.

Similarly, Vinnie discussed how the college flags helped change school culture and expectations about graduation and college:

And when you look in the hallways you will see all of those college banners. Those are all of the colleges that our kids have gone to. So, they see that when they come in to the building. It’s an expectation.

With these visual reminders, change in language, and expectations, the leaders supported a college-going culture (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009).

In sum, Garvey experienced noticeable improvements around graduation rates and community partnerships. For example, in 2002, Garvey only met 3/29 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators, but by 2010 they met 26/29 of them. From 2009 to 2011, Garvey significantly improved graduation rates by 30.1%, and during the same years, 100% of Garvey’s graduating seniors were accepted into postsecondary institutions. Additionally, in 2012, more than 73 community-based organizations partnered with Garvey to offer a variety of programs and supports for students, their families, and community residents. Programs and supports include, but were not limited to college preparation workshops, mentoring for students, tutoring, service-learning projects, parent enrichment classes, a teen health clinic within the school, career development, community fitness center, community swimming pool, financial counseling, adult-learning opportunities, and mental health services.

During the 2011 and 2012 school years, 97% of Garvey students participated in at least one community-provided support service.

The Case of Woodson High School

Developing a broad vision for the school and community. From the start of Oscar's tenure as principal at WHS, he wanted to change the relationship between the school and community. Specifically, he wanted WHS to be the central community institution. "It all started with Oscar's vision for the school to be the central focus in the community," remarked Juanita, an assistant principal at WHS. Mrs. Williams, a teacher at WHS similarly remarked, "Oscar's vision was to make this high school a community school, not just a high school building in the middle of a community." All participants echoed the sentiment that Oscar's vision catalyzed the work around urban high school reform and community development.

In fact, developing the vision was one of Oscar's first actions in supporting this work. Oscar said, "The first things we changed were some of the things that people don't recognize. We changed our vision statement from the very beginning. We wanted to be the central focus of the community, point blank!" In making WHS the central focus of the community, in essence, Oscar believed that the school was the community and the community was the school. He said, "The school is more than you, the school is more than the building; it is that whole community." Leading with this understanding, Oscar next positioned WHS as a spatial community asset.

Positioning the school as a spatial community asset. To begin making WHS a spatial community asset, Oscar conducted an inventory of the school to identify underutilized spaces. In doing so, Oscar, his staff, and leaders from several community-based organizations realized that there was unused land behind the school that could be transformed into a school-based community garden. Oscar explained,

We [he and leaders from several community organizations] started having conversations about how I have this dead space in the back of the building that is not being used. If we can find the funding . . . [We discussed] could we do a community garden?"

Creating a community garden would be huge for persons in the neighborhood from low-income backgrounds since there was no access to fresh produce.

In creating a community garden, Oscar also wanted to leverage the garden to be academically beneficial for students. Therefore, he had conversations

with teachers from the school's science department and culinary arts programs as well as stakeholders from partnering neighborhood organizations about working collaboratively on the community garden. Oscar said, "We started having conversations in culinary arts about the needs to have fresh produce . . ." A neighborhood organization supplied the funding for the garden and students planted and harvested the produce. Describing the importance of the garden for community members, Mrs. Williams said, "If neighborhood residents need something [fruits and/or vegetables] from the garden, it is free for them to come and get."

Additionally, the garden was beneficial to community stakeholders at a nearby health care facility. The community garden created opportunities for WHS students to work with a local dialysis organization. Oscar explained,

We had a program called renal herbs for the dialysis patients to help their kidneys . . . The dialysis organization decided to let our students grow the herbs. We will provide the seed, soil, and funding . . . and they gave the herbs to their dialysis patients. Now students are providing a real service and are learning how to produce [herbs] and work with dialysis patients.

In sum, making fresh produce available to the broader community illustrates community development because through Oscar's leadership the school-based community garden addressed a community need and changed how fresh produce was distributed in the community (McKoy et al., 2011; Rubin, 1994).

Championing community concerns at the school. Access to equitable opportunities was a concern for students and families in WHS' surrounding community. Juanita, an assistant principal at WHS said, "There was no access to anything. There was no access to jobs, resources, and no access to health care. All of that was limited to the student body, but especially evident in the immigrant population, which was huge." Oscar shared this sentiment, "One of the biggest barriers for [our] students is access and equity. Most often the programs that are going to perpetuate students' futures the greatest are not offered in their community."

However, a lack of access to health care was one of the most salient concerns for students at WHS; thus, this was the primary community concern that Oscar championed at the school. According to data on school reports, a lack of access to health care was associated with high rates of absenteeism, teen pregnancy, and dropouts. Realizing the importance for access to health care for students, their families, and community members, Oscar took action to address this concern. To do so, he convened a handful of community-based

organizations to discuss and strategize about the issue. Oscar recalled, “It [was] just the administration of the school and about four or five community partners [i.e., organizations] . . . and we had conversations about what can we do to address these issues.” After a series of discussions, the group formed the Woodson Community Coalition to provide a community-based clinic at the school. According to Oscar:

One of our partners received the funding to expand their community-based clinics. So, then we entered into a development phase of how I could give up space in the building and how our district could absorb some of the renovation and construction costs and they would put in a full functioning clinic [inside of the school] . . . One of [my] requirements was they had to put in an exterior door entry and signage [for the community].

The clinic fit perfectly into the vision of making WHS a community school and was a step toward dismantling barriers to health care access for students and neighborhood residents. In 2012, the clinic was the most visited school-based clinic in the city. Changing how the school, a community institution, functioned is an illustration of community development, as the school became a community asset for community stakeholders, specifically the primary health care institution for many students, families, and community members (Green & Haines, 2012).

Changing school culture. Changing the school culture at WHS was an important concern for Oscar, especially given the school’s history. Oscar explained WHS’ culture when he first became principal:

Truthfully, it was the perfect example of a low-performing school. WHS had very poor attendance rates, very high rates of discipline infractions. Woodson was known as a high gang concentration school. There was a lot of student and teacher apathy, little to no parental support and engagement, disconnect between the community, community agencies and the school.

He continued, “There were issues with teacher and student performance; it was the poster child. It did not look or feel like a high functioning school.” A teacher bluntly described, “Woodson was chaos!” However, it was the horrific gang fight that served as the tipping point to transform WHS’ culture as Oscar remarked,

That gang fight really started our community revitalization projects for school culture changes . . . When you start talking about school culture, you sort of have to do it all. You can’t change a culture by addressing one part of it. There has to be a sense of urgency!

Oscar interestingly linked school culture changes with community revitalization projects and a sense of urgency.

However, Oscar employed a two-pronged theory of action to change school culture. The first part emphasized student leadership, empowerment, and responsibility. He explained,

In a school the size of Woodson, we had 1,400 kids, which means in total we had 140 to 165 staff and 5 administrators. How do you expect a handful of adults to change the culture with 1,400 kids? It is not going to happen! We can mandate compliance, we can suspend, but when you really want true reform and commitment you have to do it differently. If you want true change to happen, make the kids own it . . . You have to start building the capacity and ownership of kids. The thing about it is that the kids want it. They want the responsibility.

Oscar was unwavering about students playing a key role in WHS' culture changes. For example, students had input on addressing and mitigating school-based problems like graffiti in the bathrooms, behavior incidents, and food fights during lunch.

The second part of Oscar's theory of action to change school culture focused on developing robust relationships with community-based organizations. As, Jody, the parent and community engagement specialist, commented, "Oscar's thing was to try to bring in resources from the community to support issues affecting students at Woodson." Mrs. Williams agreed as she commented, "Oscar sought out community-based organizations and said, 'We need you.'" Specifically, Oscar developed a relationship with a local organization that built student capacity to address issues of racism, youth voice, and youth leadership. Oscar explained,

We brought in a community organization located here in the city that really focuses on student leadership and racial harmony. We sent a group of about 45-60 kids to a 2 or 3-day camp, away from school at our expense. And they were really trained on teamwork and unity and things like that.

The students who went through the initial, intensive youth leadership camp brought a spirit of solidarity back to Woodson and helped to train other students to work on these and similar issues, which was institutionalized through creating a five-tier student leadership structure.

Additionally, to change the school culture at WHS, Oscar spent hours in the community talking with various organizations to garner support for reducing gang violence. Oscar commented,

Our efforts to address gang activity and violence were not restricted to the school or school day. I conducted gang awareness presentations with the gang task force, conducted community meetings and spoke at churches to get everyone on board or at least to let them know that we were addressing this issue.

He continued, “. . . I sought out and worked with the local community to help transform our school culture.” According to school data, these efforts were somewhat fruitful and revealed that over a 5-year period, the number of fights at WHS decreased by 93%.

In sum, WHS experienced appreciable improvements around graduation rates, student achievement, and community partnerships. For example, between 2007 and 2011, WHS graduation rates increased 15%, from 66% to 81%, and in 2011, the school met all AYP benchmarks for the first time. Writing scores also improved from 58% to 93% (+35%) across the school, as more students improved from proficient to advanced levels. During the same time, WHS gained 60 community partners that support with a range of school-community projects.

Discussion and Implications

The findings illustrate how principals and community leaders support urban school reform along with community development. It is essential for educational leaders, and those who prepare them, to think about how principals and community leaders can implement this work. As such, in this section, I discuss the cross-case findings in relation to the reviewed literature and offer suggestions for school and community leaders in similar contexts (see Table 2). I conclude with implications for future research.

The data presented in this analysis show that community development and cross-boundary leadership can emerge from principals (i.e., WHS) or community leaders (i.e., Garvey). At Garvey, principals served more as facilitators and connectors to community-based initiatives, as community leaders spearheaded many efforts, which in turn benefited the school. Here, I revisit Vinnie’s comment about how the school leaders joined the community in providing the type of quality education that they wanted for children. Moreover, principals’ efforts to support this work may, in part, include spending enough time in community-based spaces to find areas of collaboration with community leaders who hold a community-wide vision that includes the school (Khalifa, 2012). The leaders in the Garvey Case were, therefore, able to construct a vision that emphasized broader community change with schools at the center of the vision.

Table 2. Leader Actions for Urban School Reform and Community Development.

Cross-Case Actions	Implications for Principal and Community Leaders	Supporting Literature
Developing a broad vision for the school and community	Develop a broad vision that is beneficial for both school and community, and identify how responsibility, assets, and resources will be shared or collaboratively supported to achieve the vision	Blank et al. (2006); Ernst and Chrobot-Mason (2010); Ernst and Yip (2009)
Positioning the school as a spatial community asset	Strategize about how the school and other institutions can serve as an asset for the community, and support the broad school–community vision	Blank et al. (2012); Stovall (2004)
Championing community concerns at the school	Identify the most pressing school and community issues. Efforts should focus on equity-related concerns	Khalifa (2012); Noguera and Wells (2011); Stovall (2004)
Changing school culture	Spend time in the community to garner support for school culture changes. Find connectivity with community-based organizations for school improvement efforts, particularly around culture	Antrop- González (2006); Fine (1994); Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009); Legters (2002); Patterson et al. (2007)

Conversely, at WHS, the work began with principal leadership. Oscar was able to garner buy-in and collaboration for school-community tasks through conducting community meetings and identifying spatial assets at the school and how they could benefit the entire community. In turn, this allowed him to work on improving access to health care and fresh produce, while also supporting students through community-relevant instruction and community service. Oscar's leadership thus aimed to transform the place, especially in terms of access, and support the people there (McKoy et al., 2011; Rubin 1994). Building on this, principals in low-income, urban communities could take this a step further by establishing channels for students to sell produce to grocery stores across the city and region. This would provide financial resources to support the school and local economy.

In both cases, the leaders made the school a spatial asset that students, families, and community members could access (Stovall, 2004). Previous

research has documented the seven assets used in community development (Green & Haines, 2012; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), but rarely focused on which assets are most essential in community development linked with urban school reform. This study documents that spatial assets are key in such reforms. The schools, in both cases, were critical community institutions where education, health care, financial literacy, workout facilities, fresh produce, and a range of other resources were provided. In practically applying this, principals could conduct a spatial assessment to identify underutilized areas in the school (e.g., land, exercise facilities, a classroom for community learning, etc.) and have dialogues with community leaders about how such spaces could be leveraged for community improvements (see Table 2). This hearkens back to Brad's suggestion that communities and schools should mutually leverage resources so that partnerships will not be one-sided.

The leaders took several actions that illustrated community development, as defined in this study. This was clearly seen in how the leaders changed the function of community institutions (i.e., schools) to benefit a range of community stakeholders (Green & Haines, 2012; Lyon & Driskell, 2011). The leaders also demonstrated community development through achieving several school–community tasks and changed how resources were distributed, including fresh produce, health care, and access to school facilities. These tasks strengthened social ties and collaboration between multiple community organizations, such as the three community centers, State University, and local organizations, across multiple leadership levels (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). However, this suggests that expanding equity and access are central to doing community development linked with school reform, because these efforts all provided students, families, and community members access to a range of resources.

Though changing school culture is well documented in the literature (Antrop-González, 2006; Legters, 2002), this study suggests that principals can draw on low-income, urban communities of color to support these changes. These cases demonstrate that principals can link and gain support to change school culture by connecting with community-wide initiatives (e.g., community goal to improve graduation rates) and partnering with local organizations to address key school–community concerns (e.g., low educational attainment rates and gang activity). Additionally, while previous research has documented that community-based organizations are important for developing social capital between schools and communities (Warren, 1998, 2005), this study shows that these organizations are also critical for providing leadership to support school-based efforts. For example, at Garvey, community leaders from the three community centers and State University provided resources in the form of people, time, and expertise to address school and community concerns.

This study also aligns with previous models for school reform and community development that center community assets and interests instead of deficits (Keith, 1996). Here, I recall Sharon's comment about the incredible assets in the Garvey community despite its socioeconomic conditions. In the case of WHS, Oscar's strategy to draw on community-based resources to improve school culture illustrates his perspective about community resources and how they could be used to improve conditions inside of the school.

Future Research

Finally, this study offers implications for future research. Future studies should center perspectives from students, parents, and community members. These types of studies could better ground the work and its impacts in the lived experiences of these community members. Moreover, as Warren (2005) noted in his study on urban education reform and community development, asymmetrical power relations must be addressed, especially in broad-based leadership coalitions. Thus, future research could explore how principals navigate unequal power dynamics when partnering with community leaders and members in implementing this work, especially leaders of color from low-income, urban backgrounds. Similarly, research could explore how these broad-based leadership bodies negotiate power dynamics around issues like who decides what gets addressed and who names it.

Future studies in this area could also include mixed methods research to provide findings that are generalizable to wider areas of practice. Longitudinal research in this area would be useful, specifically work that analyzes the quantitative impacts of such reforms on neighborhood poverty rates, community graduation rates, and neighborhood health over time, to name a few. Last, this study offers a glimpse into educational leadership at the intersection of urban school reform and community development and hopes to push for deeper investigation on this topic.

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Notes

1. In this article, the term *urban* is used to describe geographic location (i.e., inner city), although I realize that it has other connotations.
2. According to Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012), community schools are a place and set of partnerships connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community.
3. I acknowledge that community leaders can include students, parents, community members, and a range of other stakeholders. However, for this study, community leaders are individuals who hold formal positions in local organizations with a contextual knowledge of the community.
4. In this article, I use the terms African American and Black interchangeably.
5. According to Gary Green and Anna Haines (2012), most people conflate community *development* and community *growth*. Community development is more of a structural change in organizations and how resources are distributed. Conversely, community “growth refers to increased quantities of specific phenomena, such as jobs, population, and income” (p. 5, emphasis added).
6. For exceptions, see also Crowson and Boyd (2001) and Goldring and Hausman (2001).
7. Rubin (1994) actually refers to this as community-based development leadership. However, I use the term *community development leadership* (CDL) instead of community-based development leadership for simplicity and clarity for the reader.
8. The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of national, state, and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human service, government and philanthropy, as well as national, state, and local community school networks (www.communityschools.org).
9. Pseudonyms are used to describe all people and places.
10. State University is an urban university that is two miles from Garvey High School.
11. Centers for Working Families provide services to help people from low-income backgrounds experience economic mobility.

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