

REUNNING HEAD: Better for Whom?

BETTER FOR WHOM? PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE CAMDEN RESIDENT
PERSPECTIVES' ON STATE-MANDATED RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOLS
AND RECENT CAMDEN DEVELOPMENT

BY

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the interpretations and perceptions of the Camden community – a community that is predominately minority, historically impoverished, and rapidly employing neoliberal strategies in public education (charter schools, school closure) and urban redevelopment. Using the framework of standpoint theory (Barnett, 2009; Creedon, 2007; Collins, 1990) as a lens to alternatively view change and “progress” in Camden. This study included the views of Camden residents who hold socio-political capital; yet, are profoundly impacted by the city’s employ of neoliberalism within both education and urban development. The author will highlight current and future resident viewpoints’ on living in a city whose leadership employs neoliberal tactics in redevelopment and, simultaneously, rebranding (Davis & Oakley, 2013) public education. Participants reported feelings of political alienation pertaining to participation in redevelopment and public education decision-making. They also believed such contemporary efforts in Camden are intended to benefit a different population than the low-income minorities who currently live there.

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“Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!” – Psalms 105:1

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Problem Statement

The American public often views today's urban public schools pejoratively. Images of aging buildings, crumbling facilities, apathetic teachers, and troubled minority youth who are wholly disinterested in their education, largely informed by popular media, seem to categorize how modern American society views these public institutions (Heyman & Virgil, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Bascia & Osmond, 2012). Such concepts concerning urban education suggest inner-city public schools are failing to adequately educate children (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009), presenting a clear and present danger to America's future prosperity, and a violation of urban students' state civil right to a high quality education (Perry, Moses, Wynne, Cortes & Delpit, 2010). Collective assumptions and biases concerning urban public education have been shaped by politicians and education reformers, (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009; Mackler & Wilson, 2011; Nasir & McLaughlin, 2009; Perry, Moses, Wynne, Cortes, & Delpit, 2010) as well as through popular media in films such as *Lean on Me* (1989), and *Dangerous Minds* (1995), to *Waiting for Superman* (2010) and a host of other movies (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009; Nasir, McLaughlin & Jones, 2009; Mackler & Wilson, 2011). The widely accepted idea that America's urban public education system is "failing", has motivated policy makers, business leaders, and educational reform activists to use the "failure mantra" to alter the landscape of urban public education through legislation and neoliberal education reforms such as district-takeover, public school closure, and characterization (Antrop-Gonzalez, 2003; Epstein, 2015; Taylor, McGlynn & Luter, 2013; Weiner, 2012)

Camden, New Jersey, a city long plagued by chronic poverty and unemployment, has over the past few decades, implemented various district and state interventions in hopes of improving educational outcomes in its public schools that yielded little statistical progress in assessment scores, graduation rates, and other traditional school performance metrics (Epstein, 2015). Camden's public schools, despite diversifying teaching practices and regularly changing school and district leadership, are still considered the worst schools in New Jersey (Epstein, 2015). Like other American inner-cities, where charter schools are presented as the solution to historically under-performing districts, (Geller, Sjoquist, & Walker, 2006) the newest urban school reform tactic in the Camden City School District (CCSD) is establishing of state-mandated, privately-run, charter management organization (CMO) operated Renaissance charter schools (Stratos, Wolford, & Reitano, 2015), as outlined in the *Urban Hope Act of 2012* (Cho, Chudnofsky, Jiang, Landes, & Mortimer, 2013; Ni, 2007). It is seldom mentioned, however, that Camden's Renaissance Charters will divert a significant population of district students and dollars away from district public schools (Buddin, 2012; Cho, 2013; Forman, 2007), thereby, putting the survival of public, non-charter, education in Camden, in peril (Ni, 2007).

Urban economists and urban geographers alike have long asserted that local public school quality influences residential demand, housing prices, and increasing property value (Horn, 2014; Jud & Watts, 1981; Mickelson, 2014). As such, situated within a broader Camden redevelopment perspective, to state and local elites, the establishment of Renaissance schools in Camden is considered a positive for the city to improve education (Fenwick, 2013), and likely the potential for redevelopment (Choido,

Hernandez-Murillo, & Owayang, 2010; Horn, 2014). A growing body of research suggests the presence of charter schools in poor minority urban areas has the potential to attract middle class millennials to move to the area (DeArmond, Joachim, Gross & Lake, 2014), as well as raise property values in areas where charter schools are situated (Fenwick, 2013; Horowitz, Keil, & Spector, 2009; Hankins, 2007). Researchers have been increasing attention among academics linking urban redevelopment, gentrification, and the increasing presence of charter schools in cities across the country, such as Philadelphia (Cucchiara, 2013), Boston (Kimmelberg & Billingham, 2012), New York City (Stillman, 2013), Chicago (Lipman, 2008; 2011), and Atlanta (Davis & Oakley, 2012; Haskins 2013) representing a reversal of middle-class flight from urban America and opportunities for revitalization.

Among many politicians and individuals, urban redevelopment is generally seen positively as it typically denotes a reversal of white flight into the city (Cahill, 2006; Powell & Spencer, 2002), the generating of a new tax base, and development of blighted neighborhoods (Cahill, 2006; Sheppard, 2012). But, for low-income residents in urban neighborhoods, such urban “progress” initiated and enjoyed by those with political and social capital, can also yield displacement (Zuk, et al., 2012), disruption of community social networks, and marginalization of low SES residents from community participation (Hyra, 2012; Jennings & Lynn, 2005;). And, while many Americans believe in the transformative power of education and the societal benefit of public education systems (Goldthorpe, 2014; Hertel & Pfeffer, 2014), many urban residents, like those in Camden NJ, are routinely marginalized and disenfranchised from democratic participation in decision-making on matters affecting their communities (Muggah, 2012; Lipman, 2009);

specifically within public education (Bettez & Hytten, 2011). The purpose of this study is to research how Camden's current residents, who are routinely excluded from meaningful decision-making processes, as well as prospective Camden residents, interpret these mandated Renaissance schools and the broader Camden redevelopment.

Research Questions

This study will investigate the following questions:

1. How does the establishment of Renaissance Charters influence current and prospective residents' decision to move into, remain, or leave Camden?
2. How do current residents of Camden, as well as prospective residents interpret the opening of Renaissance Charters?
 - a. Why do current and potential residents believe Renaissance Charters are established?
3. Who are Renaissance Charters and recent Camden development intended to benefit?
 - a. Who are these changes for?
 - b. What will Camden look like in the future?
4. Are current and prospective residents interested in sending their child/children to Renaissance Charters?
 - a. What matters to residents and prospective residents when thinking about schools for their child?
5. Who do residents and prospective residents believe are making decisions concerning education and redevelopment in Camden?

I will begin with a brief overview of relevant literature contextualizing urban locales wherein urban public school districts are situated. Additionally, I will discuss the topics of white-flight, residential segregation, coupled with urban divestment before examining the topics of neoliberal education reform, and charter schools. Next, I will explore literature discussing gentrification, neoliberal urbanism before turning my focus to Camden's recent efforts toward revitalization through "meds and eds" and revamping of its police department; in addition to attracting corporations to the city through the *New Jersey Redevelopment Act of 2013*. I will finally conclude the literature review by briefly discussing local Democratic powerbroker George Norcross III, the *Urban Hope Act of 2012* and the state takeover of Camden's public school system in 2013, thereby contextualizing the establishment of Renaissance schools and broader Camden redevelopment.

Significance of the Study

In an era where cities are experiencing a mass "return-to-the-city" movement by gentrifying white and black middle classes (Hyra, 2012; Powell & Spencer, 2003; Wilson, 2015) seeking to return to low income minority neighborhoods lured by shorter commutes, urban amenities and culture, and attractive home prices, poor minority residents are increasingly excluded from the decision-making processes that influences the future of their communities and education systems. And while efforts to attract a wealthier, more educated, and often whiter urban public appears to be urban planners' method of choice to revitalize cities, local residents have seen an erosion of their democratic rights, loss of political influence as actions are taking by the powerful, and politically-connected, supposedly, to benefit their current residents.

The emergence of Camden's Renaissance schools is an example of such a phenomenon. Camden's public schools had long been demeaned, and labeled "failing" by local and state politicians, and in January 2012, the *Urban Hope Act* was passed into law establishing state-mandated charter schools in Camden to run by CMOs. Camden residents had no opportunity to participate in the process that will yield fifteen new charter schools with no public accountability, and at the same time, significantly impact Camden's public school budget, and future sustainability.

Around the same time, between 2012 and 2014, other significant revitalization and redevelopment efforts in Camden took place. After nearly 140 years of service, Governor Christie, along with Mayor Dana Redd, dismantled the Camden Police Department (CPD) and started the Camden County Metro Department (CCMD). This action, too, was executed without the input of residents, despite vocal resident pushback criticizing the move. The stated rationale was that this move was to keep residents safer by putting more officers on the streets.

Following the passage of the *New Jersey Redevelopment Act 2013*, which authorized billions of dollars in tax credits, tax abatements, and grants for corporations and medical and educational institutions (meds and eds), willing to relocate or expand in Camden. Large amounts of Camden real estate including the Waterfront and Downtown areas, have been purchased by these organizations, despite there being no mandate that these companies hire Camden residents. Since 2013, the narrative has been such drastic spending is worthwhile to Camden's future revitalization because jobs are coming to Camden (Basara, 2015). Because of this, there has been a precipitous increase in home prices in the Downtown area, coinciding with rising tax and rental rates, along with the

lessened availability of low-income and affordable housing, despite the reality that most residents cannot afford to purchase new market-rate homes, or rising rental rates, and some have even begun to be displaced (Steele, 2015).

Since the transpiring of the aforementioned Camden education, public safety, and economic developments took place, a consistent narrative of a “rising” Camden, a “new” Camden, and a Camden renaissance has become routine in local media. And while local powerbrokers and politicians hail these steps as evidence that Camden is in the midst of a comeback, it is the voices of Camden’s low-income minority residents who have not been included.

This study is significant to Camden education policymakers and Camden development policymakers, as well as local residents, in that it seeks to understand how residents, who bear the consequences of such decisions, perceive these recent changes. Additionally, the dissertation seeks to highlight how prospective Camden residents, those the city is trying to attract to live here, perceive these changes as well. And while urban redevelopment projects and the presence of charter schools are not unique to Camden, they are often presented in research as from a clinical perspective based on the observations and findings of the researcher. This study however, seeks to put residents’ and prospective residents’ perspectives at the center of this research pertaining to both Renaissance school development and contemporary Camden redevelopment projects. And while Camden, the most populous city south of Trenton is the singular city of focus here, this study could provide a context by which policy makers in other areas, consider the perspective of residents and future residents, and subsequently make policy decisions relating to education and redevelopment in other urban areas similar to Camden.

Theoretical Framework

Standpoint theory, which frames this study, seeks to put forward subjugated groups' voices, interpretations, and critiques concerning how dominant groups exert authority upon them (Barnett, 2009; Creedon, 2007; Collins, 1990). While standpoint theory in past research was primarily dominant in feminist studies generally (Wood, 2005; Harding, 2009; Harstock, 1983), and subsequently the experiences of black feminists (Collins, 1990) and Hispanic feminists (Pompper, 2007) more specifically, standpoint theory seeks to highlight the perceptions of any non-dominant group whose views are often disregarded or ignored altogether yet are grounded in their own lived experiences as a marginalized group. While standpoint theory shares similarities with other modern critical theories such as critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2012), critical feminist theory (Geisinger, 2001; Rhodes, 1990), critical queer theory (Sullivan, 2003; Jagose, 1996) and neo-Marxist theory (Burris, 1987) as they present counter narratives to dominant hegemonic white, capitalist, *hetero-patriarchal* values (hooks, 2004), standpoint theory uses the perspectives and lived experiences of the marginalized as the central unit of analysis. Where other theories emerge from the exclusionary processes and traditions of established disciplines (Harding, 2009), standpoint theory's priority is uplifting and including the voices of the oppressed rather than adhering to rigid academic research traditions (Ortega, 2015).

Social justice theory, popularized by John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and subsequent academics like Robert Nozick (*Philosophical Explanations*, 1981) F.A. Hayek (*Social Justice, Socialism, and Democracy*, 1979), and others wrestle with ideas of

how equality, fairness, and opportunity are distributed among individuals in a democratic society (Burgess, 2013). Other social justice theorists see social justice as both a process and goal, through which resources and agency are disseminated, and ensuring all have equal access to opportunity (Bettez & Hytten, 2013). Though social justice is a common term employed increasingly in contemporary policy and literature, what it is, and what it looks like has yet to concretely be determined or defined. While some philosophers view social justice as the balancing of accountability, equality, and democratic consensus, others view social justice through the lens of redistribution of goods and resources to benefit the disadvantaged (Bankston, 2010; Bettez & Hytten, 2013).

Increased attention in both academic and public policy research is dedicated to marginalized populations, such as the poor and racial/ethnic minorities who are being denied social justice and restricted from equitably participating in American democracy. Getting a good education is often viewed as the primary way for the marginalized population to become empowered in a democratic society. It follows then, that the frequent justification for instituting neoliberal education reforms, *vis-a-vis* the imposition of charter schools in urban areas, is to give urban parents and their children better educational options that will, presumably, lift urban students out of their social and economic predicament. Paradoxically, while touting the merits of education reform measures like charter schools and broader school choice to improve educational and, potentially, economic outcomes for alienated groups, with the increased presence of imposed charter schools in urban centers, furthers the marginalization and disenfranchisement of communities; thus intensifying the demand for social justice in urban minority communities (Bettez & Hytten, 2013).

Camden residents, like millions of other poor urban minorities across the country, through the institution of neoliberal education and urban revitalization practices have been excluded and silenced entirely from education-related decision making processes that impact their neighborhoods. They are also faced with the possibility of experiencing demographic changes in their neighborhood through urban redevelopment as well.

Using standpoint theory to guide this study, the researcher hopes to highlight marginalized residents' perspectives and interpretations of imposed Renaissance schools and other Camden redevelopment projects. Additionally, this study (Brecher, 1977) seeks to understand whether such efforts, namely Renaissance schools, positively influence prospective residents to consider moving to Camden.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents background information on urban cities' struggles following the decline of America's manufacturing golden age. It also examines white flight, urban divestment, the contemporary urban education reform and neoliberalism. The chapter concludes by presenting literature concerning neoliberalism in public service, urban gentrification, and urban school choice.

Post-Industrial Urban Ecology

For decades, shrinking job markets and municipal tax bases have plagued inner cities. Since the 1970s and 1980s, structural changes within the American economy transitioned the urban job market from industry-based to service-based, and along with globalization and automation in factories, has led to subsequent concentration of male joblessness within urban areas (Simpson, 2000; Wagmiller, 2008). The stark shift in American employment resulting from the decline of unionized, well paid manufacturing jobs which required little formal education, to the contemporary post-industrial reality where, increasingly, jobs within cities are white-collar service sector jobs where post-secondary education is required, negatively impacted men of all racial backgrounds (D'Amico & Maxwell, 1996; Skinner, 1995). Urban black men have been disproportionately impacted by urban joblessness. Indeed, in 2010 nearly 50% of all black men of working age in urban areas were unemployed (Levine, 2012) and have persistently lagged in employment rates compared to White men since 1980 (Kroger, 2013). Black and Hispanic male urban joblessness had dire effects on communities, contributing significantly to growing single-family households, incarceration, poverty, increased juvenile delinquency, welfare dependency, and increased crime (Wagmiller,

2008). Multiple arguments have been put forth seeking to explain chronic male unemployment within the black community.

The *skills-mismatch theory* posits that with the erosion of blue-collar manufacturing jobs, where higher levels of formal education was not a requirement for employment, black men, who typically do not receive as many years of formal education as their white counterparts, are at a competitive disadvantage when competing for service sector jobs that advantage educated urban white men (Skinner, 1995). “The mismatch argument is essentially a story about the passing of the city of production and its consequences for the urban poor: the industrial city grew because it possessed labor and technical expertise. Neither literacy, language, nor technical ability counted for much in the eyes of urban employers since the few necessary skills could be acquired in ‘hands-on’ fashion on the job” (Bailey & Waldinger, 1984, pg. 4). However, researchers have argued against this skills-mismatch theory as early as the late 1970s however. Charles Brecher’s *Mismatch misunderstanding* (1977) argued the disparity in skills training and/or formal education does not account for the high levels of black male unemployment. Discrimination, Brecher concludes, is likely a dominant factor in persistent black male joblessness.

Another common argument regarding black joblessness within cities is that once readily available (Abramovitz, 1996; Massey & Denton, 1993; Patterson, 2000) factory jobs in urban areas have relocated overseas through free-trade agreements, and to domestic suburbs. Which create “spatial inaccessibility” to potential employment (D’Amico & Maxwell, 1996). The “*spatial-mismatch*” theory articulated by John D. Kain (1968), argued that the suburbanization of the manufacturing sector, along with

residential segregation in suburban areas, physically kept urban minorities from industry jobs, thus benefitting their white counterparts in employment availability and occupational opportunity (Boardman & Field, 1989; Davis, 1968; Stoll, 2005). Additionally Skinner (1995) argues that central city black men confront informational and transportation disadvantage that prevents them from entering entry level manufacturing and service sector jobs that have relocated to the suburbs. Rogers (1996) found that the more immediate access black men in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan area to had to job opportunities, the shorter their periods of joblessness were – thus lending credence to the theory that if jobs are physically out of reach for urban black men, who are less likely to own their own car or possess a driver's license, and more likely to rely on public transportation, the higher their periods of unemployment will be (Rogers, 1996).

Another argument posited to explain black male joblessness, specifically, within urban America is the legacy and lingering pervasiveness of racial discrimination. Blacks have been shown to experience “high employment disadvantage”, specifically because of race when compared to other racial demographics (D’Amico & Maxwell, 1996). More than any other ethnic subgroup, black men experience direct racial discrimination in the job market (Shulman, 1987). Although many white people in mainstream America believe discrimination to be rare and isolated occurrences, blacks by employers are widely to be perceived as “less productive”, “lazy”, “dishonest”, and “belligerent”, especially if their job application indicates they reside in a poor urban neighborhood (Skinner, 1995). Over the last twenty-five years, unemployment for blacks has remained roughly double that of whites (Levine, 2012).

Where common explanations of the persistent disparity in employment rates between blacks and whites is a comparative lack of education or higher likelihood of possessing a criminal record, a 2005 Princeton study showed that black men in New York City with a high school diploma and no criminal record were less likely to receive a second phone call from a prospective employer than a white man who had just left prison (Westerner & Pager, 2005). Alexander (2014) conducted a longitudinal study on low income and working class families of all races in West Baltimore. He found that “at 28, 54 percent of white men with a criminal record were employed full time making an average of \$20 an hour; among black men with similar records, just 33 percent were employed by 28, making just over \$10 an hour, or half that of their white peers”(p. 138). Further, employed blacks and Hispanics are much more likely to work for, at, or near, poverty wages. Even earning a two-year or Bachelor’s degree does not provide a buffer from the negative dual reality of racism, and the low geographic availability of, yet high demand for, low paying jobs (Anyon, 2005). Additionally, black employees, both men and women, typically are the first to be fired from their jobs in economic downturns, thus contributing to lingering rates of comparative black unemployment (Couch & Fairley, 2010).

Though black and Hispanic women do find employment at higher rates than minority men (US Department of Labor, 2012), they are also more likely to work for wages at or below minimum wage (National Women's Law Center, 2013). And while women nationally earn about 77 cents for every dollar a white man earns, black women earn an average of 64 cents for every one-dollar a white man earns. In that women head over four million black households, this earning disparity contributes to over 1.5 million

black households deemed to be “working poor” (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2014). Poverty plagues poor families in ways beyond household economics. Isaacs (2012) suggests poverty itself becomes a risk factor for children as mothers in poorer households are more likely to experience bouts with depression, are less educated, more likely to smoke during pregnancy, give birth to low weigh-weight babies and are in, overall, poorer health. He adds that such familial economic stress can yield to abusive and apathetic behaviors from parent to child, and that poverty negatively impacts children’s school readiness and attendance (Isaacs, 2012).

Additionally the *culture of poverty theory* first initiated by American anthropologist Oscar Lewis while conducting his ethnography *Five families: Mexican case studies and the culture of poverty* (1959) with similar theme emerging in his research of mainland and island born Puerto Ricans in *La vida: A Puerto Rican family and the culture of poverty* (1966). It wasn’t until the Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *The negro family: The case for national action* (1965) where similar concepts were explicitly attached to low-income black communities. Moynihan contended that following generations of urban minorities coming of age that benefited from expanded social services programs intended to combat poverty became state dependent (Jordan, 2004). This theory suggests that generations of urban minorities who benefited off government largesse have consequently, lost their sense of initiative and self-reliance; instead choosing to live off government supplied food stamps, welfare, and public housing (Murray, 1984). It is argued that such prolonged generational laziness resulted in many urban pathologies, dysfunctional behaviors, and chronic poverty (Moynihan, 1965; Skinner, 1995). And while a host of researchers put forth the theory that poverty is

emblematic of the poor's social and behavioral dysfunction and their complicity in continuing their own impoverished trajectory (Magnet, 1993; Mead, 1997; 1986; Murray, 1984), other researchers hold the view that other ecological and environmental factors play a much greater part in sustaining urban generational poverty like the absence of sufficient social services, poor access to quality education, limited availability of quality early childcare, and persistent racism and job discrimination (Ambromavitz, 1996; Massey & Denton, 1993; Patterson, 2000).

The lingering consequences of long-term underemployment and unemployment in urban minority communities are undeniable. With the loss of black earning power, there has been an increasing rise of poor black single mothers raising children on their own black marriage rates have dropped precipitously since the 1960s. Additionally, black youth are more likely to be unemployed (42%), than their white counterparts (25%), and black men are far more likely to be incarcerated, thus further decreasing their chances of finding sustainable employment (Fusarelli, 2011; Quane, Wilson & Hwang, 2015).

The result of historic and chronic urban unemployment, coupled with overrepresentation of low-paying jobs in urban areas, has led to the deterioration of the urban ecology, urban population decline, and the erosion of traditional community institutions such as churches and schools (Gardener, Irwin & Peterson, 2006; Wagmiller, 1996). Additionally, it has led to drastic cuts in city services, and finally, human flight from cities to suburban locales (Newman, 1998). Essentially, those that have the means and economic capital to relocate out of impoverished urban areas for the suburbs generally do, and, take their socio-political capital, and tax dollars with them. Thus, with the outward migration of white middle-class families during the 1970s and 1980s, and the

subsequent flight of middle-class blacks to the suburbs (Quane, et. al., 2015), overwhelmingly those of less means remain in urban America. Low-income minority families have been left to languish, isolated within urban areas with less municipal services and necessary social safety nets, and consequently, more challenges.

Federal housing policies actively sought to promote white-flight from the 1930s to 1980s by financing the outward migration of upper and middle class whites, exclusively, to the suburbs (Lawrence, 2002). Rapid suburban population growth and development coincided simultaneously with urban divestment and white flight as suburbs increasingly became viewed as dispensers of middle class residential services. With broad development in suburban commerce embodied in shopping centers, large commercial and industrial parks, strip malls, suburbanized employment, and a citizenry willing to pay higher taxes for quality governmental amenities (Frey, 2001), suburban living among those of affluence was viewed as an oasis-like alternative to modern urban decay. Among whites who fled urban areas *en masse* since the 1970's seeking a departure from poor urban economic and ecological conditions (Frey, 2001), for many, court ordered public school desegregation through busing or redistricting (Boustan, 2004) proved an additional motivator to seek sanctuary in suburbia (Colcough & Beck, 1983).

Following public school desegregation, urban homes prices fell nationally by about 6%, as demand for urban residences decreased as well (Boustan, 2004). White families living in urban communities, whose personal wealth was attached to their home's value, saw their economic wellbeing mitigated by simply living near black people. Thus, many white families from the 1960's to 1990's sought to find housing with a low proportion of minority residents as white-flighters believed there exists a racial

competition between whites and minority races for status and access to quality institutional services - particularly good schools for their children (Renzulli & Evans, 2012).

Through historic residential and housing related discrimination, whites in suburban areas were buffered from a black “invasion” into their suburban neighborhoods. Blacks face discriminatory housing practices throughout the rental and sales process more than any other ethnic demographic (Roscigno, Karafin and Tester, 2002). Roscigno et.al, (2002) found that African Americans are more likely to experience discriminatory lending practices from banks for home purchasing, unfair rental conditions from landlords, as well as discrimination from neighbors in homeowner’s associations, tenants’ councils, and Parent-Teachers Associations (2002). Decades of routinized discrimination in both housing and employment have helped ensure that blacks in the inner cities stayed there, while whites in suburban America stayed “protected”. Blacks and other urban minorities were not able to participate in the rush to suburban homeownership because of restrictive covenants instituted by suburban home sellers, as well as discriminatory loan practices from the federal government and mortgage lenders (Lawrence, 2002). After nearly fifty years since the landmark *Fair Housing Act of 1968*, which banned race based housing discrimination; American cities and suburbs remain highly segregated. Today, $\frac{3}{4}$ of blacks and $\frac{1}{2}$ of Hispanics in America live in urban areas (Fusarelli, 2011).

Historic conditions of housing segregation still exist today as governmental structures at all levels have failed to effectively mitigate such inter-jurisdictional and neighborhood housing segregation (Judd, 1998). The composition of public housing and affordable housing developments still tend to be concentrated within low-income, urban,

minority neighborhoods. Massey and Denton (1989) identify American cities as *hyper-segregated* in that the legacy of discriminatory housing policies and lending practices, coupled with the loss of urban manufacturing jobs over the past sixty years have left many African Americans and Hispanics isolated with little political power and relying more on public assistance (Lawrence, 2002) and often contending with urban decline and poverty for more than one generation (Sharkey, 2013). “Because segregation concentrates any factor associated with poverty and focuses it upon segregated African American neighborhoods, high African American poverty rates are translated directly into social environments where welfare dependency and single parenthood are the prevailing categories of social and economic behavior” (Massey & Denton, 1993). Over the past 30 years America’s inner cities have become places of “*hyper-ghettoization*” where concentrated poverty, joblessness, white flight, and middle class black flight all converged within urban spaces (Fusarelli, 2011). And as widening disparities in community and personal wealth and racial histories persist between urban and suburban America, the social and economic impact lingers for generations as growing research suggest neighborhoods where children reside is a strong prediction for how much income they will earn as an adult (Rothwell, 2015).

In the post urban de-industrialization--white-flight era, American cities have continued to fall into disrepair through limited revenue pools, reduced federal assistance from conservative-leaning federal governments, and population contraction that further burdened already low-income city residents and solidified urban poverty (Leekley & Seeborg, 2008). For example, Philadelphia, the poorest of the ten largest American cities, from 1960-1980 had population decline from 2.1 million to 1.4 million with a coinciding

drop in available jobs from 800,000 to 250,000 illustrating a national trend that saw cities simultaneously lose its high-income population and its industrial tax base (Frey, 2001). The persistent losses of municipal revenue and the resulting recurring urban fiscal crises that continued from the 1990s into this millennium (Frey, 2001), have had a disastrous effect on its low-income residents. Drastically reducing the quality of urban life due to a significant decrease in municipal services, cities often make austere cuts to make up for shrinking tax bases due to urban flight. Across the nation, funding to urban fire departments have been cut, police officers have been laid off, access to quality health and safety services, adequate minimum housing, local recreation programs, sufficient public transportation, and undoubtedly public education have been sacrificed through austerity budgets enacted at all levels of government (Gardener, Irwin & Peterson, 2006; Leekley & Seeborg, 2008; Luter, McGlynn & Taylor, 2008). Such weak urban tax revenue and diminishing state and federal support to urban neighborhoods led to the underfunding of schools, which hampers urban public education, which in turn deterred urban developed and further repelled middle-income earners from residing within these spaces, thus keeping urban schools racially and economically segregated, and under-resourced (Patterson & Silverman, 2013).

Public Education in Low-Income Urban America

Much has been researched on the causal relationship between the performance of public schools and its surrounding neighborhood (Anyon, 1997; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Destin, 2012; Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Fine, 1996; Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2011; Kozol, 2012; Mosburg, 1996; Reardon, 2011; Rothstein, 2004). Students in affluent areas, generally, outperform their low SES counterparts in public education

completion and standardized assessment performance. Minority urban youth, comparatively, do not perform academically as well as their suburban neighbors using traditional success indicators for a variety of non-school, poverty-related reasons (Kane, Staigers & Samms, 2001). Poor urban students are more likely to develop a weakened desire for academic success, fear of criminalization, exposure to trauma, and a reduction of cognitive development due to exposure to lead in paint and water within their residence, as well as a host of poverty-related health issues negatively impacting their schooling experience (Connecticut Commission on Children, 2004; Karande & Kulkarni, 2005; Luter, et.al, 2008;).

Many urban students are not prepared to enter school due to a shortage of preschools and early childhood enrichment programs and a growing technological divide between home and school (Luter, et.al, 2008). Poor children start their schooling at a disadvantage in terms of early skills, behaviors, and health. Typically, by the age of 5 fewer than $\frac{1}{2}$ of poor students are “ready” for kindergarten compared to $\frac{3}{4}$ of children from middle and upper class household resulting in a 27 percentage point gap in achievement from the start of their education experience (Isaacs, 2012). Thus, research suggests many problems plaguing performance outcomes of urban public schools, and their students are positively correlated with systemic urban policies coupled with historic and contemporary urban divestment and high poverty. Additionally, Warren and Mapp (2011) point to a lack of political and social capital among urban school’s surrounding community, along with poverty and racism further hampers urban school success and student development.

Poor performing urban public schools are commonly painted as mammoth, inefficient government entities staffed by out-of-touch teachers, who are protected by self-serving teachers' unions that put the desires of teachers before the needs of children (Maranto, 2002). The media and popular press further the narrative that urban public schools are ineffective by using standardized test scores as its primary source of "proof" (Kohn, 2003).

Commonly, pejorative arguments assailing the efficacy of urban public schools' are, in many cases, directly tied to performance on standardized state assessments, graduation rates, advanced placement course offerings and enrollment, student performance on national assessments (SAT and ACT), and college enrollment (Carr, 2013; Holme, 2013; Lipman 2006;). While the statistics in these areas are dismal, they often distract from larger, ecological issues that contribute to them. Largely left out of public discourse with respect to urban schools is that urban public schools serve a largely socially and economically disadvantaged student, and that the surrounding cities themselves typically struggle with larger societal issues like unemployment, crime, racial segregation, and concentrated poverty (Anyon, 2005; 1997). These realities have been shown to negatively impact school achievement in real and substantial ways. Often however, public attention is nearly exclusively directed at the low academic achievement within urban school districts as if young students grow up unfazed from these accumulating realities (Maranto, 2002), or that caring teachers can overcome the contexts in which poor students live. Policymakers' recent preoccupation with "improving failing urban schools" rarely addresses powerful ecological factors and social contexts wherein these schools are situated (Fusarelli, 2011). In sum, students, their families, and teachers

are blamed for problems that are beyond their immediate control despite vast education research that links academic performance of both schools and individual students to their respective socioeconomic environments. Lance Fusarelli's *School reform in a vacuum: Demographic change, social policy, and the future of children* (2011) argues that widespread decay and systemic divestment of large urban areas had had more impact on educational outcomes, all reforms, and curriculum changes over the past thirty years. Other urban education research suggests the persistence of failure of urban public schools in poor neighborhoods is tied to a lack of power held by the local community and poverty and racism that undermines students' potential and development (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Such concepts, concerning the relationship between schools and their environments are not new in urban education research. The Equality of Educational Opportunity report (1966), commonly referred to as the "Coleman Report", after University of Chicago Professor James Coleman, concluded the socioeconomic status in which schools are situated and the socioeconomic backgrounds of students comprising schools impacted student academic outcomes (Coleman, 1966). Kahlenberg (2013) goes further to suggest a school's social composition is not only highly impactful to academic achievement, but it is even more so than a student's own economic background.

Urban School Reform Agenda.

Few documents concerning public education in America have been as consequential as *A Nation at Risk* published in 1983. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) comprised of business community members, elected officials, college faculty, and K-12 teachers conducted the nationwide eighteen-month study. The NCEE, commissioned by the US Department of Education during the Reagan

Administration, concluded that America's position in the world as the preeminent power in industry, technology, and innovation, was at risk due to the failure of America to sufficiently educate its children at the K-12 level (O'Neill, Murphy, Huot, & Williamson, 2007). In essence, the *Nation at Risk* report pointed to the lack of uniform, homogenized curriculum, the current "cafeteria style curriculum" where students select classes based on their interest, and lack of standardized assessments as inhibitors to our nation's academic progress (Lee, 2008). The final report put forward curriculum recommendations for math, language, writing, and science related subjects, advocated for the adoption of national standards and increased standardized testing (Holme, 2013). It also called for stricter qualifications for teachers. Further, the report assailed the nation's inability to identify voids in our public education system that allowed students who were undereducated to graduate with high school diplomas (NCEE, 2003).

While the content of *Nation at Risk* (1983) was noteworthy for generating widespread interest in, and subsequently calling attention to, perceived weaknesses within American public education, *A Nation at Risk* was a merely a report - not law. And while the toothless nature of *A Nation at Risk* was apparent, its recommendations not being compulsory for adoption or implementation, the subsequent *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) acknowledged similar shortcomings in American education communicated in *A Nation at Risk*, but reached further by mandating corrective action be taken to address educational weaknesses.

NCLB (2001) was the broadest and most sweeping legislation passed by the federal government concerning the state's public education systems (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005; Hursh, 2007). NCLB was passed and signed into law with

overwhelming bi-partisan support on the premise that public schools were doing a poor job of educating America's neediest students in the neediest areas, thereby contributing to the persistent "achievement gap" between black and white students. Moreover, NCLB sought to change that "reality" by mandating that schools achieve a prescribed level of proficiency among their students in language arts - literacy and mathematics. NCLB in principle, sought to ensure greater equality and opportunity to all students regardless of race and socio-economic background through setting national mandates and ensuring accountability (Nelson, 2013). Districts that successfully met NCLB's proficiency benchmarks, Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), stood to gain financial rewards, while schools and districts that failed to reach goals would face punitive action in the form of diminished funding, mandated curriculum overhauls, faculty replacement, and in extreme cases, schools could face takeover by charter management organizations, or outright closure (Crew & Ruggiero-Anderson, 2003; Dee, Jacob, Hoxby, & Ladd, 2010; Lee J., 2008). The federal accountability system established by NCLB is driven by sanctions if schools, often highly segregated, low-income minority public schools, did not meet prescribed benchmarks.

Current accountability systems in education, relies upon standards in respective subject matter and course content, and regular assessment on standardized tests to measure performance of both teacher and students to ensure students are given a high-quality education (Holme, 2013; Mintop & Sunderman, 2009). Despite NCLB's lofty ideals of educating students "trapped in failing schools", most often, the schools deemed "failing" subject to slashed funding and closure are located in low-income, minority areas serving the very students NCLB sought to help.

Alternatively, Pepper (2007) argues the goals of NCLB were not actually to improve education in urban areas but instead to divert taxpayer money from the public sector to corporations, capture part of the market that would be receiving free education, and to stamp out middle class participation, leaving behind a marginalized, voiceless public who are powerless to resist an inappropriate use of their tax dollars (Pepper, 2007). Weiner (2012; 2008) argues that NCLB's emphasis on testing and standardization are global corporations that prefer under-educated workers who are less likely to question authority, low wages, and therefore, less apt to unionize.

Following the Bush Administration's NCLB, the Obama Administration added its own comprehensive education reform policy, *Race to the Top* (2009). Rather than singularly focusing on testing as the means to determine a schools' effectiveness in making students proficient in language arts and math, along with the subsequent rewards and punishments, *Race to the Top* (RTTT) established a mechanism for states to compete for money from the USDOE by demonstrating their commitment to change and reform of their public education systems. RTTT rewarded states that removed caps on the number of operable charter schools in their state, adopted teacher performance based standards, faculty evaluations, enacted "turnarounds" of "failing schools", and implemented Common Core Curriculum Standards (Gross, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009). The states that demonstrated such pivots in public education reform were rewarded financially, while states that did not demonstrate a comparative willingness had funds withheld (Finn Jr., Manno, & Vanourek, 2001).

There is debate with respect to the efficacy and long-term sustainability of today's accountability movement. Such sweeping federal reform efforts have been criticized in

education research as being “too narrow” in their focus on the school exclusively, and not mitigating societal, demographic, and economic issues that impact schooling; nor suggesting systemic reforms that addresses the problems of failing schools (Fusarelli, 2011; Warren & Mapp, 2011). Jacob and Ludwig (2009) stress the importance in early childhood education and early schooling in closing the achievement gap, with support from Manguson and Votruba-Drzal (2009), who posit that such programs are especially beneficial for children growing up in poverty; both academically and for their families’ economic potential. Mitigating urban poverty and addressing minority youth unemployment can allow urban students to have renewed confidence that education will lead to their own economic benefit, renew confidence in students wrestling with pursuing their education beyond high school, and relieve lingering stressors associated with poverty like homelessness, poor nutrition, and domestic abuse (Louis & Miles, 1990; Duffield, Lovell & Miller, 2009). Warren and Mapp (2011) advocate for schools and districts to partner with their communities in organizing and partnering with local organizations to drive holistic education reform to achieve organizational, institutional and community change witnessed in some neighborhoods in New York City, Chicago, San Jose, and Los Angeles (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Still, Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) write, “even if NCLB and RTTT fail in achieving practical outcomes, their benchmarks and sanctions will likely still be retained because there is a sense that other credible policy alternatives are lacking” (pg. 354). With ever-increasing standardization of curriculum and assessment with newer curriculum models like Common Core and assessments like standardized assessments like the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Career and College (PARCC) exam,

increased student and school accountability through testing, and higher standards for teachers, today's atmosphere of standards-driven accountability reform, coupled with the proliferation of urban charter schools, whose accountability does not rest with local communities, is contributing to the erosion of urban public school districts that are democratically accountable to local residents (Dixon, Buras & Jeffers, 2015; Horsford & Sampson, 2014).

Gaining popularity beyond traditional conservative strongholds, the assessment and market-driven education reform movement has gained momentum among liberals who see urban school reform as a way to improve education and access to opportunity for those traditionally marginalized (Fleming, Greenlee, Gutstein, Lipman & Smith, 2009). Additionally, an increasing number of progressive lawmakers representing urban areas where residents are overwhelmingly poor and minority, and less able to democratically participate in their public school systems, support school reforms that further silences and marginalizes their residents. Seeking to explain the stratified acceptance of education reform, specifically among progressives representing cities traditionally supportive of public education in urban area such as Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York, (Maranto, 2004) suggests many federal, state, and local policymakers representing urban constituents have private, or non-urban public schooling backgrounds themselves; and thus, have less personal connections to their local urban public schools systems than their constituents. As such, contemporary approaches to education reform such as vouchers, school closure, charter schools, and privatization, continues to gain traction across the political spectrum despite growing research illustrating these reforms recreate old, and create new, educational inequalities among students (Jacobs, 2011; Lipman, 2011); in

addition to the burgeoning public resistance against these reforms by community members (Dixon, Buras & Jeffers, 2015).

Today's market-driven school reform movement situates parents as consumers in an education market, and hinges on the idea that providing more options to parents is politically palatable, easily understandable, and assumes that parents will select the most "effective" and high quality schooling environment for their child (Luter, et.al, 2012). Charter proponents claim that by giving parents choice, they not only serve their child by selecting the best learning environment for them, but the existence of competition will yield better performance of local public schools (Jacobs, 2011). Further, the rationale assumes that by ending the "monopoly" of public education by providing more school options to parents and forcing competition among schools, schools will provide better quality education to students (Crew & Ruggiero-Anderson, 2003). Additionally, charter school organizations and voucher supporters often tout their abilities to hold their teachers more accountable for student learning, offer more innovative curricula and pedagogies, offer urban public schools much needed competition, and thereby improve education for all students (Crew & Ruggiero-Anderson, 2003; Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Research, thus far, contests these claims. While charters do provide parents a semblance of choice, research agrees that charters segregate racially, economically, and linguistically (Jacobs, 2011). There is a disparity in charter schools' constituency and curriculum with charter schools located within central urban centers likely serving economically privileged students, creative student-centered curriculum (Farmer & Poulos, 2015), while CMO charters in high-minority neighborhoods, comparatively, often employ pre-scripted curriculum and punitive zero-tolerance discipline approaches

(Burdick-Will, Keels & Schuble 2013). Burdick-Will, et al., (2013) refer to the varying types of charter schools as mission-oriented and democratic-oriented. They argue that mission-oriented charter schools are typically referred to as “no-excuse” charters that target low-income minority communities and are driven by the concepts of behavioral remediation and college preparedness; while democratic charters serve affluent white communities (Burdick-Will, Keels & Schuble, 2013; Heitzeg, 2009). Better, exclusive charters schools within cities are often in high SES neighborhoods. While partially privatized and contract schools without democratic control are reserved exclusively for minority neighborhoods (Farmer & Poulos, 2015).

Additionally, coinciding with an urban district’s increased charter presence is the increased likelihood of public school closings within those neighborhoods. Typically, reasons associated with school closures are either poor performance, yielding a take over by a charter management organization (CMO), or school under-enrollment, underutilization. Fleming, et al., (2009) argue that schools being under-enrolled are the result of neoliberal housing policy which are exemplified in extreme swings in housing markets, rising foreclosure rates in minority neighborhoods, erosion of public and affordable housing, and gentrification. The Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education at the University of Illinois-Chicago authored *Root shock: Parents’ perspectives on school closings in Chicago* (2014) and found parents believed school closings had a negative impact on their children as their school held a deep, emotional meaning for them. Further, parents and community members believed the new charters schools established in their place were not better, and urban school closings represented a loss for the community. In that urban public schools are often places that engender

neighborhood identity, pride, and tradition (Simon, 2013). Their closure often negatively impacts the urban neighborhoods in which charter schools are supposed to be helping (Bennett, 2000; Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, 2014).

Such rapid proliferation of urban charters coinciding with public school phase-outs, and closures has been referred to as an “educational assault” executed by wealthy white edu-entrepreneurs and philanthropies, and politicians on low-income minorities. Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers (2015) point out that many urban charter schools employ high numbers of young white new college graduates and white outsiders from Teach for America, Leaders for New Schools, and The New Teacher Project, which has negatively impacted the experienced black teaching workforce, and the black middle class; in addition to the explicit suggestion that black people are unfit to govern and teach black children (Dixon, Buras & Jeffers, 2015; Saltman, 2012). Ster and Hussain (2015) argue that although it is common for charter supporters and organizations to utilize language associated with black liberation and the black freedom struggle, charter schools in low-income minority neighborhoods do not truly address social justice or self-determination; and instead perpetuate dependency of oppressed people upon their oppressors (Stern & Hussain, 2015).

Urban School Reform and Urban Place-Making

The transformation in the delivery of urban K-12 education is also increasingly coinciding with more comprehensive urban planning initiatives. During the early 1990s, the Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a study Moving to Opportunity (MTO) for Fair Housing in which 4600 families in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and NYC were given the opportunity to leave their distressed

public housing environments to relocate (Rothwell, 2015). Some families were given the opportunity to relocate to low-poverty areas with counseling, while others had to relocate to an area similar to the environment they left.

The premise of the study was that poor children growing up in concentrated poverty are doubly disadvantaged, and thus to improve their chances in life, their environment needed to be improved (Gennetian, Sciandra, Sanbonmatsu, Ludwig, Katz, Duncan, Kling & Kessler, 2012). Further, the premise went, by poor children attending better schools in better neighborhoods, their academic and future earnings would be positively impacted as well. The results of MTO were mixed in that the experiment showed few detectable effects on a range of schooling outcomes for students who moved even at preschool ages while in school (Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Brooks-Gunn, 2006). Additionally, there were no clear positive implications that the move to a lower poverty residence influenced educational attainment of children who moved to low-poverty areas, as the study suggested the later a child moves, the higher likelihood they will fall behind a child who stayed in their high poverty area. But the study did illustrate that children of families who made the move did reside in higher quality units, were happier, had eventual higher marriage rates, less obese, and earned \$3,500 more dollars a year than those children who stayed in their high poverty environment (Kling, Liebman & Katz, 2007; Clampet-Lundquist & Massey, 2008; Ludwig, 2014; Chetty, Hendren & Katz, 2015).

Though urban education reform and neighborhood revitalization are often explored as separately, Patterson and Silverman (2013) suggests that the decline of urban neighborhoods and their public schools occurred simultaneously, and that urban renewal

is often stalled by poor urban public schools (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). Today, drawing on the “anecdotal” success of the Harlem’s Children Zone (Mediratta, 2007), an initiative focused on “cradle to college” support for both students and parents explicitly linking neighborhood need and academic development and the idea that urban school reform should accompany broader revitalization by attracting businesses and middle-class residents, has gained support politically during the Obama administration with his Choice Neighborhoods Planning Initiative (CN) and Promise Neighborhood Initiative (PN) (Bigland, Cody, Aldridge, Dabroski & Kajellstrand, 2011; Luter, et.al, 2012; Hanson, 2013). HCZ offers comprehensive educational and social services to the local community like prenatal classes for expectant parents, tenant associations, and technology centers by relying on philanthropy (Croft & White, 2010). As HCZ partners also exclusively with charter schools there, PNs are similarly designed employing the same model (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). PNs target negative community attributes associated with poverty by transforming neighborhoods and educational experiences by providing social services for residents of all ages like baby college for expectant mothers, early childhood education, afterschool and college readiness programs. All which coincide with the establishment of charter schools (Horsford & Sampson, 2014). As the restructuring of urban public education continues to coincide with urban development (Luter, et.al, 2012; Lipman, 2009) the aims of CNs are to utilize Housing and Urban Development (HUD) resources to develop impoverished urban spaces by decentralizing poverty, reducing population density, and transform low-income neighborhoods into mixed income neighborhoods. Here, the assumption is that geographic proximity to the

middle class, their values and resources, is the cure for generational poverty. (Lipman, 2009).

PNs on the other hand, the first federal initiative to make education central to combatting generational poverty (Horsford & Sampson, 2014), rely on United States Department of Education (USDOE) dollars to fund greater educational supports and school choice for families within those impoverished urban neighborhoods (Bigland, et.al, 2011; Horsford & Sampson, 2014; Price, 2009). Yet, are supported heavily by non-profit education providers to create charters in these leading to increased privatization and *non-profitization* of public schooling in these areas (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). The educational lynchpin of these Obama-era initiatives is the belief that school reform does not and cannot occur only within the confines of any school, and that education reform is inextricably linked to neighborhood reform (Horsford & Sampson, 2014).

The establishing of PNs and CNs modeled after HCZ are not without criticism. Croft and White (2010) and Sandbonmatsu, King and Brooks-Gunn (2006) question the efficacy of once popular programs aimed at mitigating the negative impact of poverty in children's academic trajectory. Sandbonmatsu, et, al. argues that the MTO study found no impact on low-income people moving to better neighborhoods and improved student achievement (2006). Croft and White (2010) discussed the Nurse-Family Partnership where nurses visit low-income expectant and new mothers up until the child turns two years old, to teach mothers parenting and life skills. This program failed to improve reading and math scores for children by the time they were first tested. Further, both federal programs, Head Start and Even Start, aimed at providing low-income parents childcare, pre-school, and literacy services for their children failed to exhibit improved

academic outcomes when compared to traditional early childhood exposure. Both researchers conclude efforts to better academic outcomes for low-income students through addressing broad environmental issues associated with poverty have yielded little evidence of success (Croft and White, 2010).

Further, PNs much like HCZ's reliance on philanthropic dollars, non-profit organizations, and CMOs potentially can constrict community participation and democracy. Geller, Doykos, Craven, Bess and Nation (2014) acknowledge the well-meaning in HCZ and PNs to improve academic outcomes by addressing place-based needs, but concluded past such efforts have been stalled due to mistrust between policy makers, planners, and the local constituency they seek to serve (Geller, Doykos, Craven, Bess & Nation, 2014). HCZ, PNs and CNs reliance on private dollars and non-profit administration, thus, encourages an approach that marginalizes residents' voices and needs; as such academic and neighborhood development becomes increasingly less public and less accountable to already disenfranchised residents (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). Such implementation of PNs can result in resentment, mistrust, and further exclusion of local residents, and undermine the community building PNs purport to aspire (Horsford & Sampson, 2014).

Neoliberalism in Urban Redevelopment

Neoliberal ideology champions corporatizing state public services for private capital gain. Neoliberalism rests on the theory that open, competitive unregulated markets, free from outside interference and social collective represents the best environment for social and economic development (Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009). When neoliberal principals are applied, private sector capitalist markets are increasingly

deployed in the delivery of public services as the divisions between public services and private interests erodes (Crew & Ruggiero-Anderson, 2003; Phillip, 2008). Concepts of “choice”, “competition”, “accountability”, “flexibility” and “efficiency” are no longer exclusively attributed to corporations competing for economic profit (Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009), but are more frequently being attributed to the public sector where *access to*, and the *offering of*, public services were, in the past, paramount. Within contemporary neoliberal ideology, the concept of the public sector operating principally for the “collective good” is replaced by a focus on the individual; as in “individual responsibility”, “individual choice” and individual “prosperity” (Peck, et.al, 2009). In essence neoliberalism contracts the *public* by making participation within, and authority over, state services such as incarceration, public safety, and public education, more exclusive and *less* public (Phillip, 2008).

This modern neoliberal approach to urban public sector governance caters to the interests of the privileged urban resident with economic, social, and political capital. These residents are, in terms of urban population, the minority and bear little resemblance to the urban majority. In urban areas particularly, hallmarks of neoliberal ideology are the celebration of “public-private partnerships” and the dependence on private investment and private foundations to fund public services previously considered to be public responsibilities.

With the rise of neoliberal ideology since 1970’s, cities especially have disproportionately borne the brunt of the consequences. Consistent privatization and marketization neoliberalism espouses, the manufacturing sector of the American economy has virtually vanished from American urban centers altogether in search of less

tax burdens in other American locations or other countries. Additionally, large corporations were able to escape the burden of paying American workers a livable wage, **by** collective bargaining with unionized labor. Offshoring, corporate mergers, and downsizing since the Reagan era are obvious embodiments of neoliberal business practice, but governments at all levels sought to follow similar paths.

Since the 1970's the federal government has sought to lessen its responsibility for caring for the nation's public, and instead transfer the responsibility to smaller state and local government. Thus in the modern era of less regulation for business, and austerity for state and local governments, urban America is left extraordinarily vulnerable.

Neoliberalism calls for the destruction of public systems where local residents are able to fully engage and (be) entitled to civil liberties and social services, and instead advocates for zero-tolerance crime policies, discriminatory surveillance and social control. A class-conscious and civically engaged public are impediments to urban neoliberalism, therefore neoliberalism employs market discourses like "urban revitalization", "urban reinvestment" and "market rejuvenation" (Peck, et, al., 2009). Finally, neoliberalism within an urban housing context advocates for the destruction of low and working-class neighborhoods, retreating from community planning, and increased surveillance; and in its place, privatized spaces for the urban gentry and corporate consumption in addition to the construction of mega projects meant to spur investment, gentrification, and economically gated communities (Peck, et, al., 2009).

Neoliberal Urban Planning.

Post WWII urban development focused on maintaining and develop Downtown commercial districts, and the building of public housing complexes to replace urban

slums. The development of highways in America often led to construction that cut viable urban neighborhoods in half and increasing residential segregation and causing the demise of once viable businesses (Bennett, 2000; Lipman 2011). Following the ensuing decades of urban decline, cities attempted to attract middle-income earners back but the presence of poor performing schools and housing projects were commonly cited deterrents (Smith & Stovall, 2009). During the Clinton years, the HOPE VI program sought to downsize and rebuild public housing complexes across the country. The program was to reduce public responsibility for maintenance of housing projects, deconcentrate poverty and create mixed income housing developed by private developers and maintained by private operators (Lipman, 2011). The intent was that by having upper-income earners live next to poor residents, values transference would occur and, thus, motivate the poor to abandon their culture of poverty and adopt middle class values and at the same time, increase local property values. Public housing complexes saw repairs deliberately delayed, purposeful overpopulation, ultimately leaving many across the country in a state of disrepair. In effort to “fix” the public housing problem HOPE VI gave municipalities aid to rebuild and replace public housing units but did away with a 1-to-1 ratio that mandated that for every one public housing unit destroyed, one had to be built in its place. Instead, while some HOPE VI funds went to restoring and rebuilding public housing, a bulk of funds went to private developers to develop mixed income neighborhoods and market rate housing (Geotz, 2011). Predictably, some poor residents were able to receive public housing while others did not and instead, for those who qualified, received Section 8 vouchers. Often, those who received Section 8 vouchers were forced to move into a different neighborhood, whose poverty profile was similar to

the place they were forced to vacate (Bennett, 2000). What ensued in the wake of HOPE VI was widespread displacement and subsequent gentrification in once low-income minority neighborhoods (Lipman, 2011).

Gentrification represents neoliberalism within an urban land use context (Cahill, 2006). While local and federal governments have been seeking methods to spur urban revitalization for decades, in the past, urban economic growth hinged on incentivizing businesses to operate within city limits by offering tax incentives like the federal Urban Enterprise Zone, and through selective land deals (Hankins, 2007). In the contemporary post Great Recession era, there is a deliberate “back to the city” movement with cities seeking to revitalize, not through industry alone, but by growing urban populations to increase tax revenue. As such, many new urban housing programs and municipal amenities are enacted seeking to cater to, or attract newer more affluent residents, unlike their current poor or lower class populations (Hankins, 2007; Cahill, 2006).

Gentrification, a term first used to describe the phenomenon of highly educated, middle-class outsiders moving into working-class neighborhoods is generally viewed favorably among urban policymakers and business owners. To some, gentrification signifies the reversal of white-flight and the potential for a broader tax base and increased neighborhood commerce in formerly economically depressed areas (Glass, 1964; Kennedy & Leonard, 2001). “Not coincidentally, neighborhoods that experienced the most divestment and neglect in the 1970s and 1980s have also, in the past ten years or so, been visibly undergoing processes of gentrification” (Cahill, 2006; p.340).

Gentrification in the Northeast has been occurring on a massive scale for the past forty years and is often encouraged in that more affluent residents bring new housing

investment, cultural and retail services like restaurants, cafes, galleries and other businesses that cater to higher income earners (Institute for Children and Poverty, 2009). *A reappraisal of gentrification: Towards a geography of gentrification*, (2000) concludes the gentrification of today is unlike those of previous decades noting that it is less based in a spirit of racial egalitarianism or tolerance (Lees; 2000; Portland Development Commission on Gentrification; 2002) but is highly predatory and radicalized (Betancour, 2002). Hackworth and Smith (2000) describe the three stages of gentrification with the first wave consisting of young gentrifiers who were barely middle-class but possess higher earning potential and were typically young, white, and childless seeking to grow with the community. Researchers further argue the gentrifiers of the 1980's and 1990's were solidly middle class and interested in urban areas for the investment and their eventual earning potential. The current "third wave" of gentrifiers (Jacobs, 2011), often referred to as "urban pioneers" (Lawrence, 2002; Lees, 2000) appear to be taking advantage of government enticements luring them to low-income neighborhoods, and rather than looking to become part of the community, are looking to instead shape urban communities like Harlem and Bronzeville, to reflect their own values and wants (Hackworth & Smith, 2000; Hyra, 2006; Rubinowitz & Perry, 2001; Smith, 1996).

Kennedy and Leonard (2001) argue that rapid job growth within urban centers, disillusionment with suburban living among other causes set the stage for gentrification. Hankins (2007) posits the pull of urban diversity, cultural and artistic attractions, physical proximity to political power and employment, and, in some instances, closeness to bodies of water, and the opportunity to live in lower income neighborhoods is not simply "chic", but also makes good economic sense through property investment (Hankins, 2007). As

cities across the country champion gentrification for its potential to increase property values and increase tax revenue and deconcentrate poverty (Powell & Spencer, 2003) to low-income residents in gentrifying neighborhoods, the drawbacks are undeniable. Lawrence (2002) argues that both rise in home prices and rental rates, coupled with the shrinking pool of urban affordable housing in the name of urban renewal, puts low-income and working class residents in a precarious position with many being displaced and forced from their communities. Often low-income residents reside in their neighborhoods, not by choice, but because of practical reasons including low rent, proximity to essential social services and transportation, and because of tradition and emotional connections to their neighborhoods (Lawrence, 2002).

Since the 1950s, however, governmental attempts at urban renewal have displaced poor communities and used urban space for more profitable purposes than housing those of low economic means (Gardener, Irwin, & Peterson, 2009). The decades long “war on the poor” not only involved redistribution of public aid and economic opportunity but also involved the accelerated redistribution of resources and reallocation of public space away from those of low and working class means in favor of those more affluent, thus serving to “demonize, displace, and disperse low-income people; treating them as objects, rather than subjects, of public policy” (Lipman, 2009; p. 216). This neoliberal approach to land utility in urban areas, along with neoliberal marketization and “rebranding of public education” (Davis & Oakley, 2013, p.81) has given way to further gentrification amid urban redevelopment in American cities for the past two decades.

Native urban populations often find themselves victims in today’s neoliberal urban land-use approach. Caitlin Cahill in, *“At Risk”? The Fed Up Honeys Re-present*

the Gentrification of the Lower East Side (2006), explains that gentrification, an outcome of neoliberal urban planning, specifically targets lower income blacks and Hispanics for racialized exploitation as it benefits those with agency and more financial means, who are often young, single, and white. Many minorities with little economic means, who are concentrated within urban areas due to generational underemployment coupled with occupational and residential segregation, do not possess the same options to pick and choose where to reside that gentrifiers do (Hyra, 2012; 2006). And while poor, urban residents have been left vulnerable in today's globalized "new economy" (Lipman, 2009; Haskins, 2012), dominant neoliberal urban discourse further discourages their public participation even as the shift from public investments to private capital ventures perpetuate and further their marginalization (Cahill, 2006).

As more middle-class families seek to return to the city and opt to live in urban areas, they bring with them their demand to have markets and more variety of choices, specifically in education (Taylor, McGlynn, & Luter, 2013). Urban middle class parents are increasingly seeing themselves as "consumers" within a broader educational marketplace seeking to be "won-over" and "wooed" by exclusive local magnet schools, private schools, or charter schools. Many gentrifiers demand options to traditional public schooling that did not exist in the past in effort to bypass local urban public schools due to their reputation for serving low-income minority students and poor performance (Cucchiara & Horvat 2012). Thus, urban affluent families adopt behaviors reflecting neoliberal ideology within an urban public schooling context that stresses competition and accountability.

Urban School Choice

Though urban middle class parents and new gentrifiers value “diversity” and “community” conceptually (Roda & Wells, 2013), the priority they place on expanded school choice has, ironically, been shown to exacerbate racial segregation and economic inequality within city schools with more resources and capital going to exclusive public and magnet schools (Schubert, 2013). And while gentrifiers do choose to live in urban areas, in part, because of cities’ ethnic and cultural diversity (Cahill, 2006), middle class parents often place their commitment to diversity and community aside if it means their children attends a neighborhood public school (Cucchiara, 2013). Gentrifiers do want diversity, as long as diversity encompasses people like them, and does not come at a perceived cost to their children in terms of high educational opportunity (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2012).

Although public schools in America have long been recognized as public spaces where social inequality is reproduced (Bourdieu, 1975), urban middle class parents are increasingly influencing the direction of public education through direct participation, and by exercising their choice options (Lipman, 2007; 2011). Through direct participation in urban public schools, middle class parents bring a reservoir of resources their lower income neighbors cannot offer. Middle and upper class urban parents bring with them social, political, civic, and economic capital along with increased participation. Research has shown that higher rates of participation coincide with increased educational achievement for individual students and schools, with the converse being true as well (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2012). And, in this contemporary education reform era where success or failure comes with financial rewards or consequences, middle class children

and middle class parents are assets to public schools. Maia Cucchiara and Erin Horvat in *Problems and Promises: Middle Class Parental Involvement in Urban Schools* (2012) describe, however, the negative impact middle class parental involvement can have in urban public schools. Typically, middle class parents' effort to ensure their children's school is more exclusive, and courting parents and children from similar well-to-do backgrounds to live in designated neighborhoods and attend the "best" schools; even if this behavior has a negative effect on other neighborhood children and families of lower status by consolidating resources and capital among the privileged. Data indicates that, in an urban public school context, the "best" schools are those that are racially segregated, selective, and whiter (Roda & Wells, 2013).

Charter schools have been the "fastest growing education innovation over the past twenty years," and many central city charter schools have been established along with a broader urban revitalization strategy viewed favorably by middle-class urban whites as they provide an air of elevated status among charter parents (Renzulli & Evans, 2007). Though charter schools are potentially situated to offer greater academic possibilities to low-income students from impoverished communities like Camden (Burdick-Will, Keels & Schuble, 2013; Jacobs, 2011), charter schools have also been shown to segregate by race (Jacobs, 2011), ability, income, and ethnicity by catering to a clientele that is generally more affluent and whiter and providing the promise of "better" schooling, charter schools provide the "benefits" of "white flight" within an urban context, without the drawbacks of actually moving from the city to the suburbs.

As part of the neoliberal agenda, restructuring neighborhoods and public education systems within urban areas has aided the growth of charters and school

privatization (Lipman 2007; 2009). Though the initial charter school movement was spawned in resistance to integration and court-ordered desegregation of public schools in efforts to ensure that white children would be educated in a private setting using public funding, today's neoliberal privatization charter movement has matured in messaging and gained traction (Phillip, 2009; Roda & Wells, 2013) across races and political ideologies.

The orchestrated overhauling of urban public education systems, coupled with urban land revitalization initiatives like Chicago's Renaissance 2010, HCZ, and Obama-era CNs and PNs, explicitly links the development of middle-income housing and public space, with the building of magnet and charter schools. This neoliberal practice, offering "freedom-of-choice" schools, tuition vouchers, and student-transfer plans worsen class inequality and racial segregation both in schools and urban neighborhoods, and is intended to control and regulate minority community participation within their communities (Lipman, 2007; Roda & Wells, 2013). In some instances such urban space and school redevelopment has been dubbed a "class conquest" as it often leads to higher home prices, tax rates, and rental rates, ultimately leading to displacement and further exclusion of black residents (Haines, 2007; Lipman, 2009).

The increased presence of charter schools, along with the planned collapse of neighborhood public schools, shifts the balance of power in urban public education away from the local public community, to the privileged and connected. Charter school growth both reflects, and works in concert with, the evolving neoliberal political economy in urban America (Hankins & Martin, 2006).

Though, growing research explores the efficacy of charter schools (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2012; Banks, Bodkin & Heisel, 2011; Hoxby, 2004; Chubb & Moe,

1990), the presence of school choice options in urban settings (Bifulco, Laad & Ross, 2008; Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Ozek, 2011; Saltman, 2010,), urban student achievement in charter schools (Izumi, 2008; Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012; Zimme & Buddin, 2005), urban neighborhoods gentrifying with the arrival of charter schools (Davis, 2013 Hankins, 2013; Lipman, 2009; Khadduri, 2008; Stillman, 2013), little research exists investigating urban residents' perspectives on imposed charter schools and broader urban development as a combined issue.

Camden, New Jersey, with the recent establishment of state-mandated Renaissance schools and current redevelopment projects provides a unique context to explore the views of people who are often identified to be the beneficiaries of such urban school choice and redevelopment, yet are rarely asked what they think, what they want, or to participate in decision-making process. This study seeks to better understand how both current, and prospective, Camden residents perceive and interpret such massive changes in Camden's public education system and in redevelopment projects.

CHAPTER 3: THE CAMDEN CONTEXT

Contemporary Revitalization in Camden, NJ

Since the decades following the decline in ship-building, manufacturing, and population in Camden that initiated in the 1950's, state and local government made attempts to revitalize the city back to its pre-World War II glory days. As late as the 1970's, manufacturing jobs at RCA/Victor and Campbell's Soup factories were still readily available for residents and Camden's population was above 100,000 (Gillette, 2005). But following similar patterns of post-industrial urban decline, discriminatory housing practices, and middle-class flight, both jobs and people left Camden *en masse*, leaving behind a city with much less of both. After decades of that unfortunate reality, Camden, with a current population of 77,400, eventually developed the identity of being the poorest, with a poverty rate of 40%, and the most crime-ridden city in America (Comer, 2009; NBC News, 2013).

Since the 1980's, state and local policymakers sought to reverse the decline of available jobs, and increase Camden's population by attracting businesses and developers to operate in the city through the use of Payments-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOTs). PILOTs allowed certain businesses to have substantially lower municipal tax obligations with the rationale that residents would benefit through job availability and employment (Gillette, 2005; Kromer, 2009). The Tweeter Entertainment Center (now Susquehanna Bank Center), Camden Adventure Aquarium, the Camden River Sharks, Campbell's Soup, Carl Dranoff Developers, and L3 Technologies are major businesses who occupy vast expanses of Camden real estate that continue to take advantage of PILOTs. Despite not paying standard tax rates for operating in Camden, these companies still hire few

residents. The implementation of PILOTs, it has been realized, was never a sufficient economic driver to reverse the city's employment decline, or substantively increase Camden's tax base (Waters, 2014). Camden's implementation of its own "Baltimore Strategy" that facilitated the development of the downtown inner-harbor to attract tourists, and spur greater development, has largely been deemed a failure (Waters, 2014).

In 2002, Governor James McGreevey passed the *Municipal Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery Act of 2002* (MERA) to help start Camden's revitalization. MERA at the time was the largest cash infusion from the state to any municipality in New Jersey history; it designated \$175 million dollars to Camden (Gillette, 2005; Kromer 2009). It intended to help spur Camden's renaissance by providing funds to help in the hiring of more first-responders, make long-needed repairs to the city's streets and aging sewer system, and expand Camden's existing anchor institutions (Katz, 2012). According to *How to behave like an anchor institution: A white paper by CEOs for cities living with cities* (2010), cities have increasingly turned to the development of universities, arts centers, and universities to make up for the loss of revenue caused by the exodus of urban industry and corporate headquarters. Pittsburgh, with the expansion of University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon University; University of Pennsylvania and Temple University in Western Philadelphia and Northern Philadelphia, respectively; and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, have all experienced neighborhood stabilization, greater retail development, and improved public education systems resulting from the expansion of their anchor institutions (CEOs for Cities, 2010; Officer, Grim & Medina, 2013).

In today's urban economy, medical and higher education institutions have become centerpieces as they hire large amounts of people, use local goods and services, and potentially raise property values (Adams, 2003). Of the slated \$175 million in aid to Camden, \$47.7 million dollars went to hospitals and colleges. As of 2003, Camden's higher education and medical institutions, CAM Care, Camden County College, Cooper Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, Rowan University, Rutgers University, Virtua Health System and University of Medicine and Dentistry, employed 7,224 employees with 90% living in the Delaware Valley region; 1000 of whom live in Camden (The Roper Group & A. Ilan Consulting, 2003). Further, Camden's "meds and eds" industries had a \$1.4 billion dollar impact to the state economy through wages, taxes, and tertiary spending at nearby businesses (The Roper Group, 2003). Additionally, MERA funds were used to help develop the city's downtown, and the entertainment district along the Camden Waterfront. The state did not, however, give Camden money without conditions. By accepting MERA dollars, the city was forced to submit to a state takeover of municipal functions and operations through the appointment of a state-appointed Chief Operating Officer. Further, residents of Camden were no longer able to directly elect members of its public school board, and the school district would be given a state fiscal monitor and business administrator with veto power (Kromer, 2009).

Though MERA was successful in creating of a formalized "University District" in central Camden with the expansions of Rutgers-Camden, Rowan University-Camden, and Camden County College, transitioning former public housing complexes into mixed income neighborhoods at Baldwin's Run (East Camden) and Branch Village (Centerville), establishing sidewalk beautification projects, and providing resources

renovate and modernize Cooper Hospital and Virtua Medical Center. However, few Camden residents benefitted in the way of gaining sustained employment paying livable wages or saw noticeable changes within their neighborhoods (Kromer, 2009) as issues of high crime and low employment opportunities persisted. Issues relating to crime, thousands of abandoned buildings, low performing schools, and a high concentration of poverty due to surrounding suburbs paying Camden Regional Contribution Aid in lieu of providing low-income housing within their municipality as mandated by the *Mt. Laurel* (1975) decision, hindered Camden's progress (Hammer, 2001). And following previous failed attempts at city-wide transformation through targeted development in Camden's central, Downtown and Waterfront neighborhoods in hopes that benefits would eventually filter into outer-neighborhoods, local and state leaders today are focused on improving Camden's image pertaining to public safety, job creation, and education in order to redevelop through altering city demographics, rather than simply through economics.

Camden Public Safety

Today, Camden, with a population of nearly 78,000, 30% of whom are under 18 (Laday, 2015), is the poorest city in New Jersey; and one of the poorest cities in America with a poverty rate of nearly 40% and median income of \$21,191 (Moskowitz, 2014). In 2012, Camden had the highest violent crime rate in the country with 2,566 crimes per 100,000 people; 6.6 times the national average (Crime in the United States, 2012). Since the late 1990's, *Morgan Quinto Press*, a research and publishing company, consistently ranked Camden within the nation's "Top 10 Most Dangerous Cities". In 2004, 2005,

2011, and 2012, Camden had risen to number one (Hirsch, 2009; Nye, 2012; NBC News, 2013).

Governor Christie slashed the transitional aid program to Camden in 2011, which sent nearly \$70 million dollars to Camden, which amounted to nearly 40% of Camden's municipal budget (Katz, 2011). This resulted in cut services to the city's afterschool programs, libraries, Planned Parenthood, and municipal services. Municipal workers were laid off, or furloughed, along with firefighters and 167 police officers. Though labeled the nation's most dangerous city in 2012, Mayor Dana Redd laid off the remaining 270 Camden police officers (McLaughlin, 2012) and, with the support of Governor Chris Christie and Camden County Freeholders, disbanded the city's 140-year-old police force clearing the way for the forthcoming Camden County Metro Police (Metro) force (McLaughlin, 2012). Camden experienced a record number of homicides that same year with a total of 67 (Vargas, 2013). Proponents of the takeover argued that former Camden Police Department (CPD) union contracts were too incentivized and top-heavy causing the city to be stuck paying higher salaries for older veteran officers nearing retirement, and the pensions of retired officers, rather than paying for more, younger officers (McLaughlin, 2012). Another argument was that cities, in a time of slashed aid from the state, should be encouraged to share services to cut costs.

At the conclusion of 2012, where the now defunct CPD was plagued by crime, budget cuts, layoffs, and low morale (Zernike, 2014) in 2013, the new Metro police force was approaching fully staffed status with 411 officers, up from 250, and stocked with the newest crime-fighting technology in hopes of creating a new image of a safer Camden. The new Metro police force enlists a supplementary civilian force to respond to domestic

violence and traffic incidents, employs the latest in surveillance technologies, uses a Shot Spotter system to help officers identify where gunfire is located, works closer with federal agents, and is, reportedly, forming better relationships with the community (Zernike, 2014).

The transition from the old CPD to the new Metro force was not unanimously celebrated among Camden residents. In June 2013, the case *Honorable Dana L. Redd v. Vance Bowman* (2013) was argued before the New Jersey Superior Court in Camden County where residents, who petitioned for the right to vote on the matter concerning the dissolution of CPD and creation of the new Metro force in the upcoming November election, were denied the opportunity. Residents Vance Bowman, Eulisis DelGado, Mary Cortes, Robert Davis, and Larry Gilliams, armed with petitions signed by over 8,000 residents seeking the right to vote on the issue, resulted in Mayor Redd taking the matter to court (Zernike, 2014). Ultimately, the suit was argued before the State Supreme Court in 2015 with the courts deciding the Mayor's invoking of the Faulkner Act, which allows municipal executives to "propose any ordinance and may adopt or reject the same at the polls", or decide what course of action is best for their municipality, was legal (Laday, 2013).

Despite Camden residents objecting to the dismantling of the CPD, a police force in which community members felt "knew the community and the people", in a union-busting effort, the new county Metro force, which only patrols Camden, is enjoying overwhelming support in both print and news media, and from politicians (Steele, 2015; Vargas, 2014). The perception of a safer Camden because of the Metro police resonated across the country over the past two years as they have been credited for causing a

precipitous drop in Camden crime. Camden County Police Chief Scott Thompson, since 2014, has appeared on national news outlets including *Meet the Press*, *Vice News* and *Rolling Stone* touting the Department's new technology and community policing strategies that are responsible for reducing crime (McLaughlin, 2012; Zernike, 2014). The new Metro force was hailed as a national model of effective policing strategies particularly in the wake of televised community resistance against the police as displayed in Ferguson, MO and Baltimore (Zernike, 2014). The success of the Metro department, and the image of a safer Camden it helped facilitate, culminated with a visit by President Barack Obama to the Metro force's headquarters and speech at the Kroc Center in May 2015 to highlight Camden's safer streets and its "renaissance" (Obama, 2015; Courier Post, 2015).

Critics of the new police force point out the dismantling of the old CPD, of which 77% of the officers were black or Hispanic, for the current force with 45% minority staffing, was racially motivated (Zernike, 2014). In December 2015, thirteen black and Hispanic officers sued the Camden Metro force over racial and age discrimination in hiring (Madden, 2015); a case that was subsequently dismissed in April 2016 (Walsh, 2016). Additionally, it has been pointed out in recent news articles that the Metro force is experiencing problems retaining its new hires; many of whom are from outside Camden County, and come from as far as Seaside Heights, East Orange, and Atlantic County, thereby contributing to highest officer turnover in New Jersey (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2015). New Metro trainees are being trained and compensated in Camden throughout their days in the police academy, costing Camden taxpayers nearly \$23,000 per officer, and upon completion of their training, are resigning from the Metro force and returning to

work closer to their homes (Wood & Boren, 2015). The State Policeman's Benevolence Association President, Pat Colligan, penned an open letter to President Obama following his visit to Camden stating:

Mr. President you have been misled by the public relations spin and misreporting of crime statistics to believe that the Camden County Metro is a success. This [Metro] department was created by union busting tactics with the full cooperation of Governor Christie and local leaders who, when crime spiked after massive officer layoffs, blamed the remaining officers instead of themselves (Bellano, 2015).

In the month before the President's visit, in April 2015, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a feature article illustrating the sharp rise in abuse of power and excessive force complaints against the new Metro police. Throughout the four-page feature, reporter Michael Boren highlighted the narratives of people who filed such complaints, noting that reports of abuse doubled to 65 in 2014, the year following the transition to the new Metro force (Boren, 2015), and rose to 97 the following year (Laday, 2015). Lack of community familiarity, "broken window policing", and racial bias on behalf of the police were cited by residents as reasons behind the rise in community complaints.

As for the efficacy of the new police department in establishing a safer Camden, even with improved homicide numbers and public praise from local and state politicians, Camden was still the second most dangerous city in America behind East St. Louis in 2014 (Walsh, 2016) and the most dangerous city in New Jersey in 2015 (Boren & Torok, 2015). And as Camden residents were discouraged from participating in decision-making

processes relating to public safety, and indeed were sued by Mayor Redd, the success of the new police force is still uncertain.

Redevelopment Efforts in Camden

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), through the *Economic Opportunity Act of 2013* and its Grow New Jersey program, intended to fund mega-projects and job creation in Urban Transit Zones and in the state's most beleaguered cities, was slated to invest up to \$1.75 billion in tax-breaks and grants to lure businesses and jobs to Camden. For example, Holtec International Incorporated of Marlton, a company specializing in making parts for nuclear reactors, will receive \$260 million dollars in tax breaks, incentives and a new facility. Also, The Philadelphia 76ers of Philadelphia, professional basketball franchise, will receive \$82 million dollars in tax breaks, incentives and a new 120,000 square foot facility; Lockheed Martin of Mt. Laurel, a weapons manufacturer, will receive \$107 million in tax breaks and incentives. A digital technology company, Webimax of Mt. Laurel is another business that will receive \$12 million in tax breaks and incentives; American Waterworks of Voorhees will receive \$164 million in tax breaks and incentives.

In addition, the automobile giant, Subaru of America of Cherry Hill, will receive \$118 million in tax breaks and incentives. DioGenix of Maryland, a molecular diagnostics company, will also receive \$7.45 million in tax breaks and incentives. Cooper Hospital of Camden, received \$40 million in tax breaks and incentives, and the social services outfit, Volunteers of America of Collingswood, will receive \$6.3 million in its move to Camden (See APPENDIX E for complete table). While most of these businesses are currently headquartered within 8 miles of Camden, they are also nearly fully staffed

and are not under any contractual mandate to hire a minimum number of Camden residents, yet the narrative that jobs, and presumably employment, are coming to Camden has taken shape (Laday, 2014; Windels, 2013).

Camden through the *Economic Opportunity Act*, is again returning to investing in its “meds and eds” sector as city and state officials believe such an expansion strategy is central to Camden’s resurgence and development. Especially in the central and Downtown neighborhoods. During the days of MERA, previous efforts to expand Cooper Hospital and developing land Downtown were met with skepticism among residents despite hospital administrators working in coordination with city government and the Camden Redevelopment Agency. Largely, residents of the Lanning Square neighborhood were concerned about resident displacement through imminent domain, which was proposed in the Cramer Hill section of the city in another redevelopment plan - which eventually failed (Comer, 2009).

The *Economic Opportunity Act* additionally authorized \$55 million for the construction of graduate dorms for Rutgers-Camden in the University District, \$140 million for the construction of Cooper Medical School of Rowan University in the Lanning Square section, \$100 million for MD Anderson Cancer Center, \$8.5 million for the Haddon Avenue Transit Village, and Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy, and \$350,000 for the expansion of Barnes and Nobles Bookstore at Camden County College in the University District as well (Norcross & Kirby, 2015).

Cooper Hospital along with its development arm, Cooper’s Ferry Partnership, in execution of their Neighborhood Stabilization Plan, voted to acquire blocks of land in the Cooper Plaza and Lanning Square neighborhoods using powers granted in the *New Jersey*

Medical and Health Science Education Restructuring Act of 2012. This Act is intended to strengthen Rowan University and Rutgers University's presence in southern New Jersey, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) in Newark, in addition to using the institutions in Camden to "promote long term, sustainable economic growth" through \$750 million in bonds for capital improvements over 24 years, a state aid increase of \$65 million for Rutgers University, Rowan University and UMDNJ, and \$28 million for student financial services in 2012 (Press Release, 2012). In total Cooper Hospital and Cooper's Ferry purchased nearly 200 properties for land-banking, rehabbing, rebuilding and green space claiming such properties will soon be in high demand for hospital workers and medical school students (Vargas, 2013).

The *New Jersey Medical and Health Science Education Restructuring Act* also facilitated the building of a \$62.5 million dollar facility for Rutgers-Camden's Nursing and Science Building downtown, and \$50 million dollars to establish the Joint Health Services Center along Broadway, directly across from Cooper Hospital, where Rowan Medical School will house its doctoral school for occupational therapy and Rutgers-Camden will house its computational biology program. Properties for this project were acquired through negotiation with landowners, eminent domain of absentee landowners, and the forced relocation of business owners (Lai, 2015).

Perhaps no other redevelopment project epitomizes the current level of economic interest in Camden like the development proposed for the Camden Waterfront. Liberty Property Trust proposed and was approved for a \$1 billion dollar redevelopment project along the Delaware River which calls for the building of four office towers creating an "iconic skyline", 325 apartment units, four parking garages, construction of a 120-140

room hotel, and 27,000 square feet of retail space (Steele, 2015). In order to bring this project to fruition, 600 vacant and derelict buildings must be demolished to make way for the proposed office, retail, and restaurant space designed to satisfy the “work”, and “play” elements commonly sought by developers (Hurdle, 2015). Liberty Trust Properties reported that this current development project, the largest in Camden’s history, is fueled by the desire of a younger and whiter workforce wanting to live and work in urban environments, and through generous tax incentives and credits (Kostelni, 2015).

With all the tax-funded relocation of corporations and development projects slated to come to Camden, there have been no mandates established by the state or city placed upon the companies compelling them to hire city residents. A considerable concern is that Camden’s unemployment rate, and thus its poverty level will not change much, is that most of the businesses coming to Camden through the *Economic Opportunity Act* are already locally situated, and thus simply more likely to cause longer commutes for their current workforce rather than create new jobs in Camden, for Camden. With Volunteers of America located in Collingswood, American WaterWorks in Voorhees, the Philadelphia 76ers headquartered in South Philadelphia, and Subaru America located “only four miles and an eight minute drive” away from its proposed location (Associated Press, 2015), skepticism remains on the true availability of jobs for residents. In fact, only Holtec International explicitly addressed this issue, but stopped short of making promises of hiring Camden residents; instead agreeing to establish a job training program (Associated Press, 2015).

In addition to addressing longstanding public safety and employment concerns, Camden is also seeking to lure prospective homebuyers to the city through new home

construction in targeted areas such as the Lanning Square and Downtown neighborhoods nearest to Cooper Hospital and the Rowan Medical School; Cooper Grant near the Rutgers-Camden's campus, and along the Waterfront (Laday J. , 2013). The city is providing generous lending programs and subsidies through the city's LiveCamden program for new professionals looking to purchase market rate housing in specified developing areas. The most sought-after locations are near Rutgers-Camden and along the Waterfront in the Victor Building where typically rental rates for a two-bedroom apartment go for \$1,200-\$1,500 per month. Real estate broker Jeffery Pierson commented in a 2013 article on Camden real estate, "Really anywhere near the Ben Franklin Bridge is up-and-coming, because you can just get right off the bridge from Philly, and go to your loft apartment without really being in the city for too long" (Laday, 2013).

The Lanning Square neighborhood with the development of the Medical School, Cooper Hospital and the new KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy (KCNA) features "sparkling blocks of new townhouses just a few blocks from the Cooper University Hospital, right next to a park (Steele, 2015)." Such new and refurbished townhomes in this neighborhood are stocked with fireplaces, granite countertops, recessed lighting, hardwood floors, and Jacuzzi bathtubs are on sale for close to \$190,000 with the asking price typically between \$180,000 and \$200,000 (Steele, 2015). Apartment and rental units along 6th Street nearest to Cooper Hospital start at \$1600 a month with one apartment building equipped with a fitness facility and rooftop garden (Steele, 2015). Additionally, Iron Stones Strategic Capital Partners will use \$6.2 million dollars of *Economic Opportunity Act* funds to begin construction on a 59-unit apartment building comprising two city blocks of the 400-440 Broadway directly across from the Rowan

Medical School to be called Cooper Village. These apartments are seeking to attract medical students and other employees associated with the hospital, the college, or KCNA staff (Kostelni, 2014).

Camden Education and the Emergence of Renaissance Charter Schools

Like other public services that fell into disrepair over the Camden's depression years, its public schools were not immune to the effects of poverty (Epstein, 2015). The CCSD is classified socioeconomically as a District Factor Group A district, meaning that it serves one of the poorest areas in New Jersey. According to *USA Today* (2013), over 83% of CCSD students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The CCSD is under state takeover resulting from 20 of 23 of its schools being classified as "failing" by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) in 2013 due to persistently low graduation rates, poor performance on state standardized tests, and low scores on the NJDOE Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) evaluation. Camden is also the only district in the state with an all-appointed Advisory Board of Education, under state receivership, and a state-appointed superintendent (Steele, 2015). Districtwide, during the 2014-2015 academic year, CPS had a graduation rate of 60% compared to the state average of 88.6% (Austudillo, 2015). Further, CCSD's enrollment is dwindling annually due to the continued proliferation of charter schools. For the 2015-2016 school year, there were about 15,100 total public school students enrolled in Camden. About 4,000 students are enrolled in charters with about 9,000 students attending traditional Camden public schools (Steele, 2015).

In 2012, the New Jersey Legislature passed the *Urban Hope Act* (UHA) sponsored by then-State Senator Donald Norcross (D-Camden), Assemblymen Gilbert "Whip"

Wilson (D-Camden) and Angel Fuentes (D-Camden), which allows for the establishing of up to fifteen privately-operated, publicly-funded charter schools in Camden, Newark, and Trenton called “Reniassance schools” (Camden County Democratic Committee, 2012, pg. 1). With regards to Camden, proponents of the law state, it “gives parents high quality educational options that will give Camden students a good education allowing them to go to college and get a good paying job” (Camden County Democratic Committee Press Release, 2012, pg. 1). Mayor Redd touted the legislation saying: “The *Urban Hope Act* is truly a victory for our students and offers hope for new academic opportunity. We are offering them [students] a second chance to succeed in the ever changing global environment” (Hester, 2012, pg. 1). To date, although other cities are identified in the legislation, neither Newark or Trenton took any action pursuant to the UHA or Renaissance charters; Camden is the only municipality to pursue Renaissance charters.

Renaissance schools, by statute, are entitled to 95% percent of CCSD’s per pupil spending, while non-Rensaissance charters in the city receive 90%. “Like charters, they will receive public money from the home districts for the students who attend there. In fact, the funding will be more generous than charters receive, helping to finance new construction” (Mooney, 2013, pg. 1). Unlike traditional charter schools, Renaissance charters must accept students from the local catchment area in which the school is situated. Additionally, according to the UHA, new Renaissance schools are, also, mandated to operate in “new” or substantially renovated existing school buildings as a way to provide modern learning facilities for the students. Finally, Renaissance charters are exempt from state accountability and oversight applicable to CCSD schools, and

traditional charters. The public CCSD has no oversight over Renaissance Schools, nor are they accountable to the local Camden public, instead reporting to their own appointed board and operations officers (Mooney, 2014). Alternatively, Renaissance schools report only to the NJDOE.

The non-profit organizations chosen to operate Renaissance charters in Camden are the Knowledge is Power Programs (KIPP). Which is a San Francisco based operation with a national network of 141 Mastery Charter Schools, based in Pennsylvania and operating 24 schools in Philadelphia and Camden. Additionally KIPP has New York-based UnCommon Schools that operates 43 schools across the Northeast.

Through the *Economic Opportunity Act*, the KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy (KCNA) was granted land and now sits at its Broadway location two blocks away from the current Rowan Medical School, and across from Cooper Hospital. KCMA is located where the former Camden public school, Lanning Square Elementary, was located before it was demolished in 2002 due to structural concerns (Katz & Vargas, 2013). In 2011, despite the state having spent \$10 million dollars on architectural plans for a new Lanning Square public school, the school being listed on the top-10 Priority Projects for the School Development Authority (SDA), and a community being without a neighborhood school for nine years, Governor Christie forbade the SDA from rebuilding Lanning Square (Katz & Vargas, 2011). Currently KCNA, located at the corner of Broadway and Washington St., is a \$45 million, 110,000 square foot K-8 elementary and middle school with plans on adding a grade each year until it becomes a K-12 facility serving nearly 3,000 Camden students (Mooney, 2015; Laday, 2014). Further, KIPP in March 2016, has been approved to takeover another vacant school building, a former

public elementary school that was phased out in 2014, JG Whittier Family School located in the Bergen Lanning Section of the city (Mooney, 2015).

Mastery Charter was given buildings located in the mostly Hispanic North Camden, East Camden, and Cramer Hill neighborhoods. Mastery Charter was given permission by the Camden City School District (CCSD) to take over operations at already-utilized Camden public schools: Pyne Poynt Middle School, Rafael Molina Elementary School, East Camden Middle School, Francis X. McGraw Middle School, and George Washington Elementary School. Mastery is also moving forward with constructing a new facility on the corner of State St. and River Road in the Cramer Hill neighborhood (Steele, 2015).

UnCommon Schools, operates one school that is co-located at the site of Bonsall Family School in the Whitman Park section of the city, with another school being proposed in the Parkside section of Camden. Mayor Redd for both Mastery Charter, and UnCommon Schools wrote letters on their behalf to city council requesting that the city make property and lands available for both CMOs to establish operations. Mastery and UnCommon Schools eventually plan on serving 9,214 Camden students (Education Law Center Press Release, 2014).

Camden's Renaissance schools, since their inception, have been celebrated by Governor Christie, Mayor Dana Redd, various City Council-persons, state senators, assemblymen, local media and the state-run CCSD as the way to improve educational outcomes in Camden by increasing school options for families, and expanding access to "high-quality education" (Camden City School District, 2014, pg. 1). The forthcoming opening of fifteen corporate-run charter schools sits easily, for some, within the

supposition that Camden schools have not sufficiently educated the city's children, thus, other, non-public school, options are needed (Norcross, 2012; Hester, 2012). In a September 2015 press release, Camden Mayor Spokesman Vince Basara highlighted the "Rethinking and Rebuilding of Camden Schools" in that through the UHA and Renaissance schools, Camden was given the ability to rethink from the ground up how it educates children, including the \$45 million KCNA which is already operating (Basara, 2015, pg. 3)."

The UHA, and the Renaissance charters in which the legislation established, has been contested among some city residents since the law's passage. Resident education activists criticized what they saw as the surreptitious passage of the UHA during the recess session of the New Jersey legislature, and that UHA is an attempt to collapse Camden's public school system entirely through planned public school closures similar to that of New Orleans, Detroit, and Washington, DC (Mooney, 2015). At the September 2015 New Jersey School Choice and Education Reform Alliance conference held at Camden County College in Camden, attended by both George Norcross as a session moderator and presenter, and Superintendent Rouhanifard, a presenter remarked, "The district's expanding network of charter and public-charter hybrid Renaissance charters could serve all the city's children, essentially abolishing Camden's traditional public schools" (Steele, 2015, pg. 1). Further, residents and journalists question the political influence exercised specifically by George Norcross III, who has been identified as a "key player" in getting the UHA proposed and passed (Steele, 2015).

George Norcross III and the *NJ Urban Hope Act of 2012*

In 2013, article authored by reporter Steve Volk entitled, “George Norcross: The Man who Destroyed Democracy,” profiled George Norcross III, who is commonly referred to as the most powerful Democrat in New Jersey politics. Volk’s article explains that George Norcross, along with brothers Donald, and Phillip grew up in neighboring Pennsauken, and became exposed to politics through their father who was a local political actor and union leader (Volk, 2013). Norcross III became Chairman of the Camden County Democratic Association at the age of 32, and through financially backing South Jersey Democratic candidates using a platform of fiscal conservatism combined with social pragmatism, was able to gain influence in democratic circles in the surrounding suburbs as well as in Camden (Volk, 2013). By financially supporting candidates, not only in Camden County, but all over South Jersey, George Norcross was able to consolidate his leadership and demand unity among, and allegiance from, those whom he helped get elected. Norcross, “scares his enemies, is enormously rich from public contracts with his insurance businesses, and through loyalty of his political operatives, controls ¼ of the votes in the legislature” (Moran, 2014, pg. 1) and “controls more votes in the state legislature than anyone else” (Katz, 2016, pg. 2).

It can be argued that with Governor Christie’s ascension to office, despite being a Republican, George Norcross’ power only increased throughout state politics, not just in South Jersey. While Christie, as US Attorney, was making a name for himself as a “Corruption Buster” by bringing criminal charges on elected officials throughout New Jersey, in 2006, Christie refused to pursue corruption charges against Norcross despite him being investigated by the state and the Securities and Exchange Commission in years

prior (MacGillis, 2014). In 2005, Norcross was caught on tape trying to influence the appointments of politicians, judges and using “pay to play” tactics to influence municipal contracts. During the investigation, Norcross was recorded saying, “All the Governors will work with me. The McGreeveys. The Corzines. They all will work with me, not because they like me, but because they have no choice (Moran, 2014, pg. 1).” Still, then-US Attorney Christie refused to pursue any investigation against Norcross despite insistence from two NJ assistant attorney generals attesting to the validity of their investigation (Kocieniewski, 2006).

It is widely believed that Christie, prior to his run for Governor, struck deals with key Democratic power brokers in the state, Joe DiVincenzo, County Executive of Essex County, and Norcross of South Jersey, to forward his own political ambitions. Many believe that in exchange for Christie not investigating Norcross and DiVincenzo, at a time when Christie was willing to prosecute an “Asbury Park councilman for getting his driveway paved for free (MacGillis, 2014, pg. 2),” Christie allowed the two biggest powerbrokers in the state to escape similar investigative scrutiny in exchange for their tacit support for his gubernatorial candidacy (Associated Press, 2015). In the case of Christie and Norcross, the deal many speculate took place was dubbed the “I-195 Deal” in which Norcross refused to campaign for, or endorse then-Governor Jon Corzine, in exchange for Christie not campaigning for any Republican Assembly or Senate candidates in South Jersey. “By working with Norcross - by dealing with him – Christie could infuse his term as governor with near limitless potential” (Katz, 2016, pg. 2).

Though, Norcross has been described as “the guy with the cigar and horns” (Volk, 2013, pg.1), “an arrogant and profane bully who threatens to castrate his political

enemies” (Moran, 2014, pg. 1) and presiding over an environment “where hardball politics ends and a culture of intimidation, dubbed ‘La Costra Norcross’ by his enemies looms” (Rys, 2006, pg. 1). Norcross has been irrepressible in influencing recent Camden-centered politics to his will. An Associated Press article, “Christie’s Camden tax-breaks rewards political insiders” (2015), details how over \$2 billion in spending by the NJEDA may likely benefit Christie’s political cronies than the city it was billed to help (Horowitz & Mulvihill, 2015). The article details how much of the money designated for disbursement is targeted to reward companies that “donated to Christie’s campaigns, the Republican Governors Association while Christie was Chairman, or companies with ties to George Norcross III (Associated Press, 2015, pg. 1).”

Norcross in addition to being the Chairman of Connor, Strong & Buckelew, one of the largest insurance firms in the country, is also the long-serving Chairman of Cooper Hospital that recently received \$40 million dollars from the state. He is also on the Board for Holtec Industries that received \$260 million dollars, and George Norcross’ brother’s law firm represented the Philadelphia 76ers in negotiating the team’s \$82 million in tax credits (Associated Press, 2015). Bill Hankowsky, Chairman of the development firm Liberty Property Trust, is slated to receive tax credits well over \$500 million. He detailed that, “George Norcross deserves credit for clearing the way for what’s to come with the Waterfront” and commenting on their friendship that has spanned decades (Mulvihill, 2015, pg. 1).

With the passing of the UHA and the Renaissance schools that resulted, Norcross was able to execute his plan for influencing public education in Camden as well. In as early as 2011, Norcross began giving a series of speeches focusing on education, and on

the future of education in Camden specifically. In separate speeches and interviews Norcross decried Camden's public school system and the lack of parental involvement in students' education saying, "80% of the city's fourth grade students don't read at grade level" and "I remember my mother showing me flashcards and encouraging my brothers and I to do our homework and that is not a luxury all [Camden] children possess with regards to those with absent or withdrawn parents" (Smith, 2011, pg. 1). Further, Norcross began speaking of a then-hypothetical network of charter schools in Camden on account that "saving Camden would require saving its public schools, or at least having educational options open to its families." Norcross also remarked in 2011 regarding Camden education, "I think a material change could happen 24-30 months from now. I see starting in the next number of months, principally with the affiliations we have, and then the process of a new project will follow" (Mooney, 2015, pg. 1). In January 2012, the UHA was passed and later that year, John Mooney wrote, "Not one to do things small, George Norcross has enlisted a power-packed partnership of players—seen and unseen—in a bid to essentially create a mini-district of new schools for the city of Camden" (Mooney, 2012).

Reporter Claudia Vargas, in "A Renaissance school provision raises concerns" (2013), reported on the political dealings associated in the establishing of KCNA. "The Lanning Square project was created by a partnership of KIPP, one of the largest charter school networks in the country; the Cooper Foundation, the charitable arm of Cooper University Hospital; and the Norcross Foundation, established by the family of Norcross, who is chairman of Cooper University Hospital, a Democratic leader and managing partner of the company that owns the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. George Norcross' daughter,

Alessandra, a director of the parent company of the *Inquirer*, is an officer of the foundation and a board member of KCNA” (Vargas, 2013, pg. 1). Further, both residents and reporters paid specific attention to the proposed, and eventual, location of the KCNA and the history regarding the demolition and refusal to rebuild public Lanning Square Elementary. “Central to Norcross’ plan is a vast expanse of vacant land next to the Cooper medical complex in the city’s Lanning Square neighborhood that once housed a public school until it was torn down nearly a decade ago for a new one” that has not to be rebuilt (Mooney, 2012, pg. 1). KCNA is situated along the still-developing “eds and meds” corridor, down the street from the forthcoming Joint Health Services Complex for Rutgers Science and Rowan Medical students, down the street from the Rowan Medical School, and across from Cooper Hospital (Vargas, 2013). Additionally, many of the homes surrounding KCNA have either been purchased by Cooper’s Ferry Partnership or were acquired through eminent domain. The neighborhood in which KNCA is situated in one where the most visible signs of redevelopment with massive building construction, home rehabilitations, and rising home prices are apparent. This continues to fuel criticism pertaining to the process by which the land was acquired to build a Norcross-supported charter school and not a public Lanning Square Elementary; and whether current residents’ children will, in the future, still be around to attend the city’s newest school in the most developed neighborhood. “The public needs to know how this happened” (Katz & Vargas, 2011, pg. 2).

While some Camden land-use policies focused on creating a pro-business environment in Camden, and others targeted spurring homeownership, and attracting middle class residents, the *Urban Hope Act of 2012* that established Renaissance charters,

appears to be, yet another redevelopment policy via public education. Consistent with conventional wisdom that people choose to reside in areas where municipal functions are satisfactory, and where schools are “good,” this study investigates how both residents and perspective residents perceive the new Renaissance schools.

For this study, I will research how both residents and prospective residents interpret the new Renaissance charters and the city’s current redevelopment projects that are happening around them. I will investigate how the establishment of Renaissance charters and recent redevelopment projects shapes current and prospective residents’ views of education in Camden. This study will also highlight how the Renaissance schools affect peoples’ thoughts regarding their future residence in Camden. Finally, I will examine whether current and prospective residents view Renaissance charters as part of an unfolding redevelopment effort intended to lure non-Camden residents to the city, resulting in eventual gentrification, and displacement of Camden residents.

While it is typical to hear policymakers and those in positions of power assert actions taken to facilitate Camden’s redevelopment and the establishing of Renaissance charters are for the benefit of Camden’s primarily low-income minority residents, residents are rarely asked what they think, what they want, or to participate in decision-making processes. This study seeks to find out what Camden’s residents and prospective residents think about the educational and developmental changes that are, supposedly, for them.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The marginalized, low-income urban residents in Camden and prospective Camden residents often have decisions made on their behalf, that may or may not reflect their wishes or desires. This study is designed to investigate and highlight Camden residents and prospective residents' interpretations of newly-arrived, state-imposed Renaissance schools, along with broader Camden redevelopment.

Working Definitions.

Prospective resident – a person expressing a true consideration of moving to Camden permanently within the next five years

Current resident – any person residing in Camden presently as their primary residence

Renaissance school – CMO-operated schools in Camden established through the Urban Hope Act of 2012

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to uplift the voices of Camden's marginalized residents, as well as prospective residents, who are rarely given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that impact them. The central questions driving this study are:

1. How does the establishment of Renaissance schools influence current and prospective residents' decision to move into, stay in, or leave Camden?
2. How do current residents of Camden, as well as prospective residents interpret the opening of Renaissance schools?

- a. Why do residents and prospective residents believe Renaissance schools have been established?
3. Who are Renaissance schools and recent Camden development intended to benefit?
 - c. Who are these changes for?
 - d. What will Camden look like in the future?
4. Are residents and prospective residents interested in sending their child to Renaissance Charters?
 - a. What matters to residents and prospective residents when thinking about schools for their child?
5. Who do residents and prospective residents believe are making decisions concerning education and redevelopment in Camden?

Research Design

As I am interested in how current Camden residents and prospective Camden residents perceive and interpret the establishment of state-mandated Renaissance schools in concert with broader redevelopment in Camden, I sought to understand how these recent occurrences influence their views regarding education in Camden, their decision to reside in Camden, and who residents believe these recent changes are intended to benefit.

In that this study's purpose is predicated on understanding participants' common experiences, and their individual perceptions, a phenomenological qualitative study was most appropriate (Creswell, 2008).

Participants

Participants were drawn from both current Camden residents and prospective Camden residents. Following William A. Sampon's methods for recruiting participants in his study of home environments of academically successful Black and Hispanic students (2002; 2003), I used local civic organizations and community establishments as the starting point for my participant recruitment efforts. During community meetings in each of the respective neighborhoods, I introduced myself and informed attendees about my study. I then asked that anyone who was interested in participating to complete a brief questionnaire eliciting demographic and biographical information, and any redevelopment and education changes potential participants observed. Questionnaires were then collected. Initial data collection entailed attending civic group meetings in Camden's mostly Hispanic North Camden neighborhood; the mostly-Black Lanning Square, Downtown and Whitman Park neighborhoods; and the gentrifying Victor Building/Cooper's Grant neighborhoods.

I attended civic group meetings and community locations in the Lanning Square, North Camden, Whitman Park, and Downtown neighborhoods because these are the neighborhoods where the first Renaissance schools were established. I wanted to get a sense of how residents in those areas made sense of the new Renaissance schools operating in their respective communities, possibly even serving their children. I also selected the Victor Building/Cooper Grant neighborhood for research because that neighborhood is showing active signs of gentrification. It is a developing neighborhood with primarily middle-class renters and homeowners, and many Rutgers University-Camden upperclassmen and graduate students live there in "off-campus" housing.

Camden County Council on Economic Opportunity, Inc. (Camden County OEO).

The Camden County OEO is a non-profit agency aimed at providing social supports for families living in Camden County. The agency itself provides help for low-income families in securing job training, child care, energy assistance, and employment. Because of the variety of services provided by the Camden County OEO, and its Broadway location in the Lanning Square section of Camden, the OEO building is a neighborhood hub for residents to discuss community concerns and issues. Through this agency, I was able attract participants residing in Lanning Square for my study.

United Neighbors of Whitman Park (UNWP).

Located in the Whitman Park section of Camden, UNWP sits at the corner of Norris and Chase Streets and was established by former Camden Councilman Ali Sloan-El and Bill Nickens (Vargas, 2012). Offering free haircuts and summer lunches for local children, job training and employment opportunities for adults, UNWP embodies the true meaning of a community center.

In 2009, out of the UNWP office Whitman Park resident Anthony Ways established Camden African Neighborhood Development Organization (CANDO) to forward the initial mission of UNWP by dedicating its energies to community development through community fellowship, personal health, and personal responsibility. CANDO sponsors adult night-time basketball leagues and softball leagues for men, as well as a kickball league for women. Additionally, CANDO offers seminars on HIV/AIDS, swimming, and job training to anyone willing to avail themselves to the

organization and its services. Through this organization, I have been able to connect with, and find study participants from the Whitman Park neighborhood.

Respond, Inc.

Respond Inc., much like the Camden County OEO in Lanning Square, seeks to provide additional support to low-income residents in North Camden. Through providing childcare, affordable daycare programs for seniors, services for the homeless, and job training for youth and adults. Respond, Inc. is a non-profit agency that has been closely tied to its North Camden community for over 41 years. As an organization that has developed a lasting relationship with North Camden residents, and because of the variety of services Responds, Inc. avails to the community, many North Camden residents use Respond, Inc. facilities as a community meeting place to fellowship and receive aid. Here, introduced myself and my study to the North Camden community and found participants from the neighborhood. Additionally, because many audience members Spanish-speakers, I was be accompanied by a Spanish-speaking translator.

Centerville Simbas Youth Football.

Centerville Simbas Football, founded in 1969 by long-time city residents and pillars of the community, Patrick Freeman, Dhamiri Abayomi, and Arnold Byrd to “provide strong male role models for many fatherless children” (Saul, 2016, pg. 1). Under the current direction of President Rashaan Hornsby and Vice President Rasheed Pollard, the Centerville Simbas is a citywide youth football organization that aims to improve academic outcomes and life trajectories of young boys through football. Though historically the Simbas attracted young men living in the Centerville section of Camden, today, the team comprises boys from throughout the city and many father-volunteers.

Despite the recent national acclaim the Simbas have achieved in recent years through repeatedly qualifying to participate in the Pop Warner National Championships in Orlando, it remains a Camden-centric community organization that serves boys from all over the city, and an institution in the city. The organization performs community service, holds fundraisers for a variety of interests, and thus, doubles as a Camden civic organization in addition to a football club. By presenting my study to the leadership of this historic football club, I was able to target, primarily, black males from all over the city who were interested in participating.

The Supper Club.

The Supper Club is a group initiated and facilitated by a Rutgers University-Camden professor, Stephen Danley, and a web developer, Joseph Russell. The Supper Club seeks to get people together to fellowship while eating in some of the many Camden sit-in eateries. The Supper Club, going into its second year of existence is made up of primarily white career-track Camden expatriates, as well as young professional and college students (Paolino, 2015). The Supper Club convenes monthly dining sessions, and here, I was able to recruit Camden residents from the Victor Building/Cooper's Grant neighborhoods, and prospective Camden residents to participate in this study.

The only prerequisite for participation in this study was that participants identified themselves as over eighteen years old and, either current residents or prospective residents. There was no compensation for participation in this study.

Data Collection

As I am interested in how Renaissance Schools and contemporary Camden redevelopment projects are perceived and interpreted by current Camden residents and

prospective residents in the four different neighborhoods, I employed numerous qualitative data collection procedures.

Questionnaires.

First, I presented the purpose of my study and issued flyers at community meetings throughout the city. There, among those who expressed interest, I issued a paper questionnaire for potential participants to complete consisting primarily of background and demographic questions. Questionnaires elicited respondents' demographic information, residential status, employment information, academic history, perception of Camden public schools, perceptions of municipal/governmental functions, perceptions of Camden quality of life, opinions of change within their neighborhood and Camden overall, and finally, initial impressions of new Renaissance schools that have been established in their neighborhoods. While typically questionnaires are quantitative tools utilized to yield numeric depictions of attitudes and trends for a population sample participating in experiments, in this instance, they were utilized to identify potential study participants (Creswell, 2009). I administered the questionnaires in person and collected them upon completion.

Following the collection and analysis of returned questionnaires, participants' information was sorted by neighborhood, in order to develop a neighborhood demographic snapshot and to ensure equal geographic representation among participants. The information was analyzed and entered into Dedoose. Only data from respondents identifying themselves as "eighteen and older", "current Camden residents" or "prospective Camden residents" were analyzed and entered. All responses entered

remained anonymous. Information from those identifying themselves as “non-residents” and “non-prospective residents” were omitted and destroyed.

Upon collection of the questionnaires from respondents in person, I conducted purposeful sampling “intentionally to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2008: p. 214) consisting of six respondents who identified themselves as either a “current Camden resident” or “prospective Camden resident” from each of the five civic groups to participate in my study consisting of focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews. Purposeful sampling in this study was appropriate in that it is a method “widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas, Horvitz, Green, Wisdom, Hoagwood & Duan, 2013, pg. 1). I chose six participants from each civic organization, for a total of thirty participants, because I wanted equal representation from across neighborhoods in order to capture participants’ perspectives of Renaissance schools and recent Camden development projects which may vary depending on where participants lived or planned on living. Seeking to maintain a balance in neighborhood participation, respondents were selected to participate in our neighborhood focus groups to represent the spectrum of neighborhoods, ethnicities, academic statuses, income, gender, and ages.

Focus Group Participant Breakdown

After selecting which thirty respondents would participate further in the focus group interviews, seventeen black Camden residents or prospective residents participated; six Hispanic residents or prospective Hispanic residents participated; and seven white Camden residents or prospective residents participated. The age range across focus group

participants were from 24 to 83 years old. Thirteen out of thirty focus group participants had school-aged children in Camden public or charter schools, and seventeen participants had either no children, or children who had aged out of K-12 schooling. Twenty three of thirty focus group participants self-identified as *current Camden residents*, and seven identified themselves as *prospective Camden residents*. Eleven of the thirty focus group participants graduated college, with nineteen participants having less than a bachelor's degree. Nine of the thirty participants identified themselves as middle class, with twenty-one participants self-identifying as working class or low-income. (SEE APPENDIX: D)

Focus groups

Following the collection and analysis of questionnaires, I used purposeful sampling of six respondents per neighborhood, of varying demographic, ethnic, economic, and residential backgrounds to conduct a two focus group sessions per neighborhood of residence (six residents per neighborhood group; three residents at most per focus group). I employed the use of focus groups to interview a larger group at once, retrieve more data, and with the supposition that a less rigid structure would create a more conversational atmosphere among participants and allow for the collection of a "shared understanding about a phenomena" (Creswell, 2009; p. 226) by exploring participants' views about living in Camden, public education in Camden, and their views of the new Renaissance schools along with recent Camden revitalization efforts. Focus groups are also an effective mechanism in creating an atmosphere of common-ness in sharing and struggle, particularly for frequently marginalized and silenced groups (Pompper, 2007).

Focus groups for this study were held at Camden neighborhood eateries, Little Slice of New York Pizzeria near the Rutgers-Camden campus, Corriene's Place in

Parkside, and San Juan's Comida in East Camden. For the focus groups (Cresswell, 2009; Harper & Cole, 2012), I secured a portion of the venue and provided food to help facilitate a comfortable and conversational environment (Grim, Harmon, & Gromis, 2006). The duration of each focus group interview was 2-2.5 hours. During the interviews I used a semi-structured interview protocol asking few prescribed questions of the group while taking field notes regarding participant responses and an audio recorder to capture the conversation accurately (SEE Appendix B). Data in the form of note-taking and audio recording will be collected and transcribed. As I am not a fluent speaker of Spanish, I had an interpreter accompany me and serve as a translator for the Cooper's Poynt and East Camden focus groups, though their services were unneeded. Comments captured during the interview were attributed to the speaker, then coded using Dedoose. With two focus groups conducted per neighborhood, there were eight focus group events in all.

Individual Interviews

Finally, I employed purposeful sampling, targeting four focus group participants per neighborhood to be interviewed individually, for a total of sixteen individual interviews. Each interview lasted 1 to 1.5 hours and took place in participants' environment of choice which included their homes, places of work, coffee shops, and in one instance, on the street outside of a barbershop in the rain. Individual interviewing was employed after all neighborhood focus groups interviews were completed to glean more in-depth, and introspective interpretations of participants' conceptions and perspectives on Renaissance schools and recent Camden development (Creswell, 2009). During the interviews, I explored participants' histories and experiences living in Camden, what

influences participants' decision regarding where to reside, what factors would facilitate living in Camden in the future, or leaving, and their opinions of Camden gentrification and redevelopment. I took and recorded notes manually, in addition to recording the interview electronically. The interviews were then be transcribed, entered into Dedoose, and coded for analysis.

Confidentiality

Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, which potentially involves participants identifying family members, government officials, and employers in a negative manner, all respondents were assured confidentiality of their responses. This research study was approved by Rutgers University IRB and all participants signed informed consent documents. Further, all participants were given psuedonyms to ensure participants' anonymity.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative Analysis

To analyze my qualitative data set comprised of qualitative responses to questionnaires, data retrieved from focus group interviews, and from individual interviews, I first entered responses from respondents and participants in Dedoose from only those who reported being "over eighteen" and a "Camden resident" or "prospective Camden resident." Next, after transcribing the focus group interviews and individual interviews, and where needed, I employed member checking by scheduling follow-up meetings or phone calls as a safeguard against misinterpretation and, in some instances, to gain clarity. Harper and Cole (2012) write, "member-checking continues to be an important quality control process in qualitative research as suring the course of a study,

participants receive the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy” (p. 511).

After the member-checking process, I entered transcriptions and notes I generated during both focus group and individual interview sessions into Dedoose for more targeted analysis and to begin the coding process. Codes such as “prospective Camden resident”, “current Camden resident”, “Camden in the future”, “policy beneficiaries”, and “decision-makers” were established for organization and grouping purposes. The coding process in this study was critical as it allowed me to create a framework where I could organize and chunk entered data so that I could begin to form a larger narrative emerging across recurring themes that would speak to my initial research questions (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, after the coding process, I developed memos that explicitly connected common themes; then I used the collection of codes and emergent themes that addressed my initial research questions and developed conclusions based on the data set. The unit of analysis and data will be the voices and perspectives of the oft-marginalized Camden community (Pompper, 2007; Harding 2009; Hon, 1995) and prospective Camden residents.

Researcher Positionality

As a black male teacher in a Camden public school, and resident of Camden who is concerned about matters of social justice, democracy in public education, education reform and urban revitalization, I am motivated to investigate the perspectives and interpretations of both residents and prospective residents of Camden concerning Renaissance schools. Further because of my frequent presence at Camden community events, both recreational and social justice-oriented, I was able to easily access residents

who ordinarily are marginalized from decision-making processes. Finally, as a black male in his mid-thirties, with visible tattoos, and looks much like other Camden residents, presenting myself, and this study to civic groups and individuals, likely, was much easier and greeted with little detectable suspicion and an overwhelming willingness to participate from groups and individuals.

To mitigate my biases and to ensure validity for my qualitative study, I triangulated coded information and participant review of data, compiling of thick, rich description. I also crosschecked data with participants to maintain accuracy of data where confusion in meaning and intent arose (Creswell, 2009).

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

SUSPICION AND SKEPTICISM

The results of the analysis retrieved from both participant focus group and individual interviews will be presented in this chapter. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the establishment of Renaissance Charters influence current and prospective residents' decisions to move into, stay in, or leave Camden?
2. How do current residents of Camden, as well as prospective residents interpret the opening of Renaissance Charters?
 - a. Why do residents and prospective residents believe Renaissance Charters have been established?
3. Who are Renaissance Charters and recent Camden development intended to benefit?
 - e. Who are these changes for?
 - f. What will Camden look like in the future?
4. Are residents and prospective residents interested in sending their children to Renaissance Charters?
 - a. What matters to residents and prospective residents when thinking about schools for their child?
5. Who do residents and prospective residents believe are making decisions concerning education and redevelopment in Camden?

Themes within the data include: (a) suspicion and skepticism that Renaissance schools is a sufficient attraction to lure and retain prospective and current residents; (b)

change is happening in Camden but not for current residents; (c) recent Camden redevelopment efforts, including Renaissance schools are a plot contrived by powerful outsiders, including George Norcross to benefit his financial and political interests, (d) Camden residents have nuanced and layered views of Camden public schools and enroll their children in Renaissance schools and charter schools for, primarily, non-academic reasons; and (e) the belief among participants that current redevelopment efforts and Renaissance schools are connected approaches aimed at attracting non-Camden residents.

Suspicion and Sketpicism

A growing body of research correlates citizens' housing choices with school quality, the willingness of people to relocate and purchase homes near charter schools, and the impact charter schools have in raising nearby home values (Bennett, 2000) (Burdick-Will, Keels, & Schuble, 2013). In Camden, like other urban communities, the perception of chronically underperforming public schools has long been cited as a obstruction to city-wide progress by frustrating the return of middle class professionals as residents and homeowners. The popular narrative held that underperforming Camden schools kept middle class earners away, and at the same time caused Camden residents who earned middle class incomes, to eventually move to the suburbs if they had school-aged children (Volk, 2013). The rationale that new Renaissance schools provide "high quality" Camden options to families (Camden City School District, 2014, pg. 1) and that a "new network of charter schools" (Mooney, 2012, pg. 1) will serve as alternatives to Camden's "failing" public schools, presumably, is an attempt to rebrand the delivery of public education system in Camden, similar to what has been exhibited in other urban areas such as Atlanta, Chicago, and Phildelphia (Davis & Oakley, 2012). Whether the

offering of school choice in Camden, in the form of imposed Renaissance schools, is sufficient to alter prospective Camden residents and current Camden residents' residential decisions, is much less clear.

One of the findings in this study was that of skepticism among current residents, and the middle class prospective residents that Camden is trying to attract, that new Renaissance schools are a sufficient anchor for current residents and a lure for prospective residents. Further, suspicion in the study was apparent in that both prospective residents and current residents wondered if an alternative delivery in public education through the imposed Renaissance schools, meant a better education for Camden's children. While the assumptions concerning the efficacy of Renaissance schools made in the media by proponents, that Renaissance schools are "high quality", "excellent", and have a "track record of success", among study participants, there was much less certainty.

Of the thirty people interviewed in focus group and individual interviews, twenty-eight expressed varying degrees of doubt concerning Renaissance schools' ability to attract prospective residents or retain current residents. Harry, a low-income, black high school graduate and Parkside resident in his late 30's remarked:

Get this, they're bringing in KIPP, Mastery, and Uncommon. These people actually brag about being 'no-excuses'? My thing is how does 'no-excuses' improve education and who would send their child to a school like that? Did you know they give demerits for not wearing the right color uniform, chewing gum, and talking in the hallway? They would never put a school like this in the suburbs.

And what are they gonna do educationally besides focus on testing? I'm not sending my kid to those schools that's for sure.

Harry's remarks demonstrated a similar refrain among participants lamented the manifestation of educational change being forced on to Camden. Though Renaissance schools were rationalized as an educational need and improvement for Camden, the implementation of no-excuses charter schools as the embodiment of educational change was commonly scrutinized, and at times, outright rejected.

Robin, a white working-class social worker in her fifties, lives in the Fairveiw section of the city. She acknowledged the concerns some families have regarding Camden public schools, but at the same time questioned whether Renaissance schools could attract white, non-residents who have schooling concerns:

I know white people just like me who fully believed in wanting to live here and be part of the community, but as soon as they had kids, they bolted right out. But for them to believe that these schools are a solution for outsiders to move here, I just don't see it. I would say that's a lot of faith to put on any charter school... to think that people would move or feel comfortable moving to Camden in part because of new schools (pauses)... Schools were not really at the forefront of my mind when I thought about moving here. But then again, I don't have any kids. But I believe people are more concerned about safety, high poverty, and...kinda just being white and living here.

Robin, expressed the willingness of other white residents to reside in Camden, but were dissuaded from their original plans because of the city's public school system. Still, she was skeptical that the establishing of Renaissance schools would be viewed as a

solution that would allay white residents' educational concerns. Further, Robin identified other issues plaguing Camden that may be more apparent in white residents's mind when deciding to move to, or stay in, Camden. Another participant was a longtime Camden resident named Tianna. She is a black female working as a clerk at Camden High School, is in her late thirties, graduated from Camden High School and attended Camden public schools her entire schooling career. At present, she is working her way through a nursing program to earn more money, and has three children. Tianna's daughter is the oldest and recently graduated from Camden High School and both of her sons attend Camden High School. Pertaining to school quality and her residential decisions, Tianna offered:

I'm still here because I love my city. I have hope for my city. And my sons did attend charter schools, D.U.E. Season which is now closed... And they keep advertising these Renaissance schools, but if they take over the district the way people are saying they are trying to do, to make sure these Renaissance schools are here, I would move out before I send my kids to one of them. My kids have all gone here [Camden High School] and all are on track to graduate and go to college so we're fine with or without these new charters [Renaissance schools].

Here, Camden resident Tiana expressed that though she has sent her children to charter schools in the past, the emergence of Renaissance schools which, in her view, can threaten the future of Camden public schools would be a reason to move out of Camden. Expressing love for her city as the primary motivation for her staying in Camden, Tiana's perspective challenges the oft-repeated narrative that people move out of Camden because of the school system. A participant named Shaheed is a fellow Camden High School alum, and son of a Camden public school teacher. He is in his mid-forties and

works in healthcare as a social worker. A college graduate and Camden resident, Rasheed offered a different take regarding Camden schools and his residential decisions:

Man I'm a tell you like this, I been planning on moving out of Camden... And the only reason I haven't so far is because I bleed purple and gold [Camden High School's colors] and I played football here and I want my son to finish his playing here too. If it wasn't for him going to Camden High, I would have been out. Plus he's doing well. He's on the honor roll and all that, but as soon as he graduates, I'm out of here.

Suprisingly, and often not considered when discussing Camden's public schools, Shaheed communicated that a sense of pride and tradition in Camden's schools is a reason to stay in the city and not move out. From Shaheed's perspective, Camden's public schools are reason to stay.

Prospective Camden residents, Rebecca, Ryan, and Josie of the Victor Bulding/Cooper Grant neighborhoods, were all in their late 20's, earn middle class incomes, and are without children. Rebecca, who is white, is also a teacher at a progressive elementary school in a surrounding suburb. Ryan is a white male, who is finishing up graduate school and grew up in nearby Cherry Hill. Josie is a Latina who works in advising at a nearby university, and although she grew up in Camden, did not attend public high school in Camden nor has she permanently lived in the city since leaving for college nearly a decade ago. During focus groups, despite being neighbors and earning similar incomes, these participants voiced divergent opinions pertaining to Renaissance schools' ability to keep them here permanently. Josie commented:

There are public schools in Camden I'd be interested in trying out once I have children that age, but if I'm dissatisfied, I like the fact that I have options here including Renaissance schools... I mean I like the idea of what I hear about Renaissance schools, and I think, if I'm not satisfied with any of the public schools, and I'm not able to establish my own school by then, I could see me sending my child to a Renaissance school, but as for the schools impacting where I live, I don't know about that. There are many factors that influence my decision on where I live. Primarily, proximity to where I work. I just happen to live really close to where I work. But if I find a better paying job somewhere else, we're all moving. Renaissance school or no Renaissance school.

Josie's comments communicate that though she may be interested in Renaissance schools in the future, the establishing of such schools has no bearing at all on where she will reside in the future. Rather, Josie's residential decisions are based more on the proximity of where she works. Again, Josie's views challenge the popular conception that people opt to live in neighborhoods where there are good school systems as determining factor in their residential decisions. Josie's perspective indicate that school systems, whether viewed negatively or positively by potential residents is not, universally, a deciding factor and that people make decisions on where they live for a variety of non-school related reasons.

Ryan added:

With the neighborhoods looking how they look I can't see how that would work. Honestly. That's pinning a lot of hope on a school because there's so many other factors. I can see if the school was put together really well, and offered a

remarkable education, and experiences... Literally, I can't see people moving in [to Camden] for it [Renaissance schools].

Ryan's comments echoed the skepticism that Renaissance schools would be viewed as an educational improvement sufficient enough to attract other white middle class professionals like himself. Here, Ryan like Josie indicated that his decisions on where to live in the future is contingent on many other non-education related factors.

Rebecca interjected by challenging the pedagogy offered within Renaissance schools, arguing that would deter her from permananetly moving to Camden because of the schools. She commented:

Absolutely not! When hell freezes over, that's when I'd send my child to a Renaissance school. If anything, with all the Renaissance schools propping up, it actually makes it more likely that I'd move out of Camden because there is no way I'd send my kids to a school whose primary concern is testing and discipline. That's not to say that I don't have conerns about Camden's public schools; I do. But I would rather send my kids there or to a Catholic school, but certainly not a Rennaissance school. And the idea that people like me [middle class whites] would be attracted to charter schools like these enough to draw us here or keep us here is laughable.

Like other participants, Rebecca was critical of the brand of educational change being established in Camden through Renaissance schools, noting her dissatisfaction with their pedagogical approach. Further, she acknowledged having concerns about Camden's public schools, but at the same time saw Renaissance schools as type of schools she

would actively avoid enrolling her children in. In Rebecca's view, Renaissance schools are a deterrent to her becoming a permanent Camden resident.

Liev, a white middle-class college professor in his early thirties and prospective Camden resident, also of the Victor Building/Cooper Grant Neighborhood, echoed similar skepticism about whether Renaissance schools could change outsiders' perception of Camden education enough to attract people to move to Camden. Liev remarked:

I always talked to friends and family about buying a home in Camden and they think I'm crazy, sometimes, even my fiancé' does too. We're debating about moving here because we're getting married soon and thinking about having kids, but I think sometimes...what are my kids gonna be doing here? What's here for them amongst all this concentrated poverty? I do know for a fact that there are public schools I'd like to send my kids to here, and I know I'd be fine living here. But I'm an adult. I wonder about putting my child in the situation where he would be the only white kid in the entire school. I wonder that because I know I won't be sending my children to KCNA[KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy], but at the same time...I don't know if any of these Renaissance Charters are anyway to attract outsiders to feel comfortable about education here. With the exception of KCNA, the others [Mastery and UnCommon] are 'no-excuse', 'drill and kill' schools that serve only poor black and Hispanic students. White parents would not send their kids to these schools, but I'm sure some medical students at the school [Rowan Medical School] would send their kids to KCNA, but I'm not sure many more non-Camden residents would be attracted to live here because of these schools at all.

Liev, while communicating his desire to live in Camden in future, and having demographic concerns about sending his children to Camden's public schools, would be open to the idea of enrolling his children in public schools. Further, he was skeptical that establishing Renaissance schools are a suitable approach to attract middle class white professionals to Camden via education noting that "no-excuse" charter schools are often intended exclusively for black and Hispanic children. His views that white parents would not send their children to Renaissance schools except for KCNA challenges the idea that greater expansion of choice options, alone, is an attraction to white prospective city residents.

Ted, Ms. Pat, and Mr. Fussell, during a focus group for the Lanning Square neighborhood, contributed their views. Ted is a black, current resident in his late thirties, and a business owner in the construction field. Ms. Pat is an elderly black woman in her sixties and a counselor at the Camden County OEO facility for women. Mr. Fussell is an elderly black man in his eighties who owns a barbershop in the Lanning Square neighborhood. While Ted is childless, Ms. Pat and Mr. Fussell, also current residents, both have adult children who have aged out of the public school system long ago. Pertaining to their residential decisions and the establishment of Renaissance schools, Fred replied:

These Renaissance schools make no difference to me at all. I don't have kids... All this means nothing to me. I plan on leaving Camden within the next five years anyway because the business climate here for black [owned] businesses is toxic... I'm a resident, lived here all my life, graduated from here, started a business here, hire residents that live here and all that. You would think that the city would want to promote what I'm doing and have me involved in all this redevelopment. But

nope. It only goes to those firms with political connections so I'm out of here... probably to Charlotte or Raleigh or something.

Ted, a childless current resident expressed the establishing of Renaissance schools does not influence where he chooses to live in the future at all. Instead, Ted is primarily concerned with the lack of business opportunities in Camden which is influencing him to consider moving elsewhere. Again, perceptions of school quality, or the presence of school options in Camden is not a factor to this current resident in determining to stay in or leave Camden.

Ms. Pat, agreeing that the establishment of Renaissance schools does not impact her residential decisions, added:

All my kids graduated from Camden public schools. They weren't perfect or without issues, but overall, I didn't have problems with my children going to Camden schools. They all graduated and went to college and are doing pretty well. My daughter still lives here and her daughter goes to Sumner [Elementary School] here. I heard about these new schools [Renaissance schools] coming here and taking over, but this is not an issue that affects or impacts me at all... And this is not the change I'm interested in. I care about all these prostitutes walking up and down the street, and the cops just riding by like they don't know what's going on... I'm concerned about my taxes going up. I don't make a lot of money and I live around the corner here [in Lanning Square], and I can't afford it anymore. I really am planning on moving down to Virginia with my sister within the next year because my city taxes keep going up and I've been here all my life and haven't seen anything like this.

Mr. Fussell concurred speaking:

All this, this doesn't impact my decision on where to live in the slightest, and I doubt it will really impact anyone else's decision really. The bottom line is this: people live in the best place they can afford. Most of the people live in Camden for a two reasons, they either choose to because of some emotional or family attachment to this place, or they can't afford to live anywhere. I see them trying get white people to move here, but these schools aren't gonna be enough to get them here.

For residents Ms. Pat and Mr. Fussell, presumably because they both have adult children, the presence of Renaissance schools does not impact their respective decisions on whether to stay in, or leave Camden at all. In the case of Ms. Pat, the establishment of Renaissance schools, along with other Camden redevelopment projects, are actually negatively impacting her ability to stay in Camden because of her rising taxes. Mr. Fussell offered a profound argument that is rarely acknowledged when discussing people's residential decisions pertaining to Camden; that people live in Camden because of an emotional connection with the city, or because it is one of the few localities in New Jersey current residents can afford.

To Ted, Ms. Pat, and Mr. Fussell, the establishing of Renaissance schools and local Camden public school quality, have no bearing on their decision to reside in Camden in the future.

Ms. Nancy is a parent of a child who attends a Renaissance school currently. Ms. Nancy is a Latina in her late forties, currently unemployed, and a long time resident of

Camden in the East Camden neighborhood. In our individual interview, she explained that she did not necessarily “choose” Mastery Charter, but her son attends the school because the former public East Camden Middle School was taken over by Mastery Charter this year. When asked about whether Renaissance schools made her want to stay in Camden as a resident, she replied:

Not at all. Even though my son goes to Mastery, that’s not the reason I’m staying here. I own this house – straight out. I only have to pay my taxes and my bills. I don’t have to pay any mortgage, and I don’t rent. I know its [her home] not much...It’s not a mansion or anything like that, but it’s mine and I can afford it. Why would I leave and to start all over again?

Ms. Nancy, though having a child currently attending a Renaissance school, offered flatly that the presence of the Renaissance school has no impact on her staying in Camden in the future. In communicating that her home is paid off, and as a result, has no plans of moving anywhere, Ms. Nancy conveys her decision to reside in Camden is primarily based on personal economics, not K-12 education.

Of the thirty people interviewed for this study, only Rashawn, a middle-class, college educated, black male and current resident in his early thirties with two young sons, responded that the emergence of Renaissance schools influenced his decision to stay in Camden. Rashawn offered:

Yes, Renaissance schools do impact my decision to stay in Camden because I have been looking for a good school for my sons. And when I mean a good school I mean a school where the bathrooms are clean, have soap in the bathrooms. Where they have a good curriculum, and teachers that care. My wife and me have

been debating more and more about what we are going to do with our living situation as our boys get older because we didn't want them going to Camden public schools. Now we have this alternative.

Rashawn's view that Renaissance schools did positively impact the likelihood of him residing in Camden was the outlier in the study. Consistent with other findings in an abundant body of research, middle class Rashawn was encouraged by the growing number of educational options in Camden in that, in his view, he can find a good school for his children in Camden where, before, he and his wife were considering relocating to avoid the city's public schools.

With respect to the idea that current and prospective Camden residents view Renaissance schools, an alternative to Camden public schools, as a sufficient anchor to retain current Camden residents and attract prospective residents, the majority of study participants viewed that concept as unlikely. Though common in academic literature and popular belief that people move near "good schools" and that increasing urban school options coincides with an increasing population of middle-class residents, in Camden it appears people's residency decisions are largely determined by non-educational factors like household economics, affordability, and emotional ties to the city. While there were varying degrees of disinterest and skepticism concerning the ability of Renaissance schools to attract prospective residents and retain current residents, it was near unanimous that Renaissance schools are not enough to keep residents or lure prospective residents. Additionally, among some participants, the continued proliferation of Renaissance schools would seem to have an adverse effect on their decision to reside, or permanently take up residence in Camden.

Discussion of Skepticism and Suspicion

In this study, participants discussed their views concerning whether Renaissance schools were a sufficient attraction to lure prospective Camden residents, or retain current Camden residents. For many of the participants, the overwhelming response was one of skepticism or suspicion, in that prospective residents viewed the Renaissance schools as an ineffective method to change Camden public education that would not alter their decision to move to Camden permanently with their future families and children. Further, for most current Camden residents, the establishing of Renaissance schools, is not a factor at all in influencing their decision to continue to live in Camden, with the exception of one participant. Such consistent agreement among participants who either live in Camden currently, and middle class prospective Camden residents who presumably, Camden is trying to attract, presents a more complex narrative concerning the presence of school choice as an attraction mechanism.

A rich body of research suggests a linkage in residential neighborhood choice and local school quality (Patterson & Silverman, 2013). Further, many assumptions have been made regarding the links between “good schools” and “good neighborhoods”, and “failing schools” and “bad neighborhoods”, with the presence of “poor schools” in Camden, like other urban areas, being blamed as a primary culprit sustaining resident flight from the city, and middle class aversion from residing within cities today (Grooms & Williams, 2013). The offering of selective public schooling (magnet schools) and charter schools in urban areas across the country, has been a tactic employed by state and local governments seeking to offer the specter of improved urban education through exclusivity and school choice intended to draw middle class millennials, retain urban

middle class residents, in order to thus, increase city homeownership and municipal tax revenue (Cucchiara, Gold & Simon, 2011; Grooms & Williams, 2013; Roda, 2013).

While some cities like Charlotte, Harlem, Brooklyn, Chicago, and Philadelphia have seen the implementation of school choice increase homeownership and local development in isolated areas (Danielsen, Harrison & Zhao, 2014; Patrick, 2015), participants in this study offer a bleak picture with respect of similar results in Camden. Current residents, largely, expressed the desire to stay in Camden out of sense of love and emotional connection to the city. Thus, many current residents, both with children and without, expressed the presence of Renaissance schools had no influence at all on their decision to stay in Camden in the future. Prospective residents expressed the imposition of “no-excuse” Renaissance charters not necessarily improving education in their view, and therefore do not provide any incentive for them to move to Camden permanently.

Additionally, prospective residents, on the whole, reported being turned-off by Renaissance schools, and roundly expressed the pedagogical approaches espoused by such “no-excuse” charters, is one they would actively avoid. Thus, it appears the imposition of Renaissance schools as a mechanism to attract people to Camden through “offering high-quality options” (Rouhanifard, 2015), and to retain residents who are believed to, move to find better schools for their children, is insufficient.

CHAPTER 6

“CHANGE IS HAPPENING, BUT NOT FOR US”

Throughout the study, the idea of a “different” Camden or an eventual “unrecognizable Camden” emerged as a common theme. Current residents and prospective residents both conveyed their awareness that something different is taking shape in the city. Many of the current changes in Camden conveyed by participants were based on visual observation as well as hearsay, prefacing many comments with, “I heard...”, or “someone told me that...”, before making their declarative statement. That *something* is happening in Camden now, was understood by everyone, though varying elements of Camden’s recent changes resonated differently depending on the participant. Some participants noted the change in policing as the most noticeable change, while others mentioned the idea of more jobs coming into Camden with the arrival of numerous corporations, and others commented on the recent influx of charter schools like Mastery and KIPP.

While residents and prospective residents clearly noticed the changes, either visually, experientially, or through what they heard from acquaintances, who such changes are intended to benefit was much less clear or specific in participants’ minds. And though the narrative concerning recent changes, pertaining to education and public safety changes, and economic development in Camden is “for Camden”, what that actually means seems to be open for interpretation, and certainly depends on who is asked.

Changes in Public Safety

During a Lanning Square focus group, the most apparent changes in Gee and Mar's view, was the change in policing. Gee, a married black truck driver with a young daughter, is in his early thirties and has lived in Camden his entire life, with the exception of the time he was incarcerated on drug charges. He graduated from Camden High School "with honors", played on the same 2001 basketball team that won the New Jersey Tournament of Champions, and just got "caught up in the wrong things." Gee, regarding the police remarked, "Metro is everywhere, all over the place. And they on you. The corners now don't look nothing like how it used to. Stand there for a second, and you gettin' ran down on."

Mar, is a black male and also a current resident. He is a graduate of Camden High School and truck driver, with a young daughter and is an aspiring rapper and business owner. Mar commented, "The Metro is also way whiter. Its like they don't have no black cops here anymore. They all young white boys. They don't know these streets or the people... but they're out here."

Gee and Mar's remarks concerning the changing in police demographics and behavior represents an over-arching concern that comes with the concept "new" and "improved" in Camden when community is disengaged from decision-making. Current changes in policing in Camden, from resident's perspectives resulted in a majority-white police force with no connection to the city, and an imposed change of routine for those living here.

In an individual interview with Salaam, a black male Camden resident in his mid-thirties who owns an entertainment company and is the President of a local youth football club was more overtly critical regarding the change in Camden policing:

I remember when Camden used to be a great place to live and grow up man...

Yeah, we had the drugs and the crime and all that, and though some of that has slowed down a little bit, it's not because of the Metro at all. It's really because a lot of the guys who were involved in that life have simply grown up and moved on... Matured and what have you. I used to be into some of those things, got locked up and all that, but you live, you learn, you mature, and do better with your family. But when I was a kid in high school, especially when I first got my car, we used to all pile in the car and take the 'tour'... where you drive through different neighborhoods and blocks and seeing what's up, seeing your people or whatever. The corners actually were our spot to meet and greet one another because that's where blocks meet up, and usually where there's a stop to sit on or a store or something. Our kids can't do that now. Our kids try that, stop on a corner to say 'what's up' and they getting pressed [questioned] by the Metro. They not doing anything wrong, anything criminal, nothing that we didn't do coming up when Camden was more of a community... I remember trying to unlock the gate so my football team could practice not too long ago, and they ran down on me! They actually started questioning me, like I was breaking in to a damn football field. It's my program! I run this. Those white Metro cops didn't even know who I was. The President of this thing, standing right in front of them.

All this happened as some of my players were arriving at practice...they saw me up against a car, getting questioned like some criminal. I was like, 'damn'..."

Salaam's remarks, through recalling an instance with the new police force, illustrates a perceived disconnect and noticable change between the Camden residents and the new police force. By reflecting on his own memories as a youth in Camden, Salaam laments that the change in police force is altering a Camden he has come to know and is sentimental about.

Ms. Hailey is a longtime Camden resident in her late forties. She is a black woman who lives in the Parkside neighborhood, and is a special education teacher at a Camden public school. Mentioning the police as the most noticable change in her mind, recalled:

I'm a working woman here. I earn a decent income and I chose to stay in Camden because I love it here. I grew up, went to school here and all that. But this new Metro police, with all these young white boys, don't have a clue of what is going on or what they're doing... Because of my income, I'm able to afford the two nice cars that I have. So when driving on Haddon [Avenue] on my way to get home, I can't tell you how many times I've been stopped by these police who question me, pull me over, and give either no ticket or a ticket for tint. This is just harassment. Of me! This never happened with the old police force. And yeah they talk about how safe it is here or whatever, but it's the same as it always was. They're not doing anything different, except harassing people more. The same thing happened to my son who lives with me when he was driving home. He pulled up to our house, was trying to get out, and a Metro cop told him to get back

in the car and did all this questioning... It's such an insult and maddening. And I'm a tell you like this, which you proably know 'cause you live here too, Camden isn't all that bad at all. If you in that life [drug life], then you gonna get caught up [in trouble]... but me and my son never had a problem here. We went to school, work our jobs, live normal lives. All that 'Camden is so dangerous stuff...Please.' But it sure got those new Metro white boys here.

Ms. Hailey's comments allude to racial profiling and harrassment by the new police force comprised of mostly young white outsiders. She, like other current residents participating in this study noticed the change in policing through race and an increase of personal harassment from people who "don't know the community."

Denise, an unemployed black female Camden resident in her mid-fifties who confessed to struggling with drugs and alcholism in the past, contributed:

It seems like crime actually got worse since the Metro got here. All these people dying and what not. The Metro cops don't know what the hell they're doing. I have a son who's 28 and I worry about him all the time. I pray for him, but he be out here in these streets. I pray and give it up to God and that's all I can do. These Metro ain't shit. They'll pull you over for tint, or loud music, but when there's a shooting, even when they got all that gun detection shit [Shot Spotter] they brag about, the people on the street figured out that it only seems to work at night, so they started shooting people in the day time, and all these white cops out here are clueless on where to go. They don't know Camden.

More than criticizing the racial makeup of the new police force, Denise questions their ability to do the job for which they are tasked for carrying out. Commenting they

“Metro cops don’t know what the hell they’re doing” calls into to question the efficacy of the new police force in keeping Camden safe, and lowering the crime for which they already received national acclaim.

All study participants, recognized the presence of the new Camden County Metro force, noting their policing tactics, comparing how Camden is policed now to the time under the former Camden Police Department, with many participants questioning why the Metro was created, and why now. Many participants wondered why there is such an explicit impetus to fight crime in Camden presently, when crime has been an issue residents have been contending with for decades. When asked about why participants believed the new Metro force was created and the, seemingly, sudden effort to address crime in Camden, Robin explained:

I mean I see it as a bad....I see it as both I see it as good that they’re trying to clean up the area, but they’re not trying to clean it up for the people that’s here. They’re cleaning it up to bring in the people they want here...so thats why its a good and a bad. I mean if they wanted to clean it up for the people here, then they shoulda done that years ago. Now all of a sudden they wanna clean it up and make it [Camden] look all shiny and new and safe.

Robin makes it clear that in her view, the creation of the new police force is to benefit people who are not current residents, but instead to create an illusion of a cleaner and safer Camden for outsiders.

Tina, an unemployed Latina female Camden resident in her early forties believes the new police force was initiated to give suburbanites and arriving corporations an

image or feeling of safety, especially in areas seeing major redevelopment. Tina explained:

I used to live downtown and I seen alot of downtown change... they started to put up new schools and clean up the area like around Cooper Hospital. So In order to bring money into Camden and you want to have businesses like Amazaon or something here, they're gonna want to bring in their training facility, too... If I were a millionaire businessman, I would want to make sure that, number one, my employees are safe getting to work becuase if they aren't, they won't show up to work and my productivity levels will be off... They don't wanna see people standing around on corners, just hanging out or selling drugs or whatever. So with the new police force and all the patrols going on down there, those people will feel safer, and I guess might rebuild a home to live in or purchase a home there... Go watch and see how many Metro cops and security gaurds you see Downtown and by the Waterfront. See if you see those cops in the hood where we live at.

Tina remarked that her suspicion concerning the creation of the new Metro police force in Camden is to benefit the arriving businesses and corporations. By commenting on geographic partrolling zones of the police force, Robin noted that the areas where the police and security presence is most prominent, is not in the communities, but where businesses are located.

Denise commented:

Why you think Metro is here all of a sudden... Like suddenly the Mayor or Governor cares about us [Camden residents]. When you see all these killings do you ever see or hear the Mayor at all. She don't give a shit about us that's for

sure... These new white cops is here because they want all these white people they want to come to Camden, and all these college students and them. This ain't for us. Believe that. How could it be for us when they fired all the black and Puerto Rican cops who lived here or at least grew up here, to bring in theses fools who don't know shit.

Denise openly connects the arrival of the new whiter police force, with the idea of facilitating the pending arrival of new young white residents. Further, Denise was vocal in communicating her disbelief that the Mayor of Camden cares about current residents at all.

In another interview, Liev added:

I think it's all window-dressing. They have the new cars, the new uniforms. The President coming here...that was pretty unfortunate. I think he got caught up in the storyline. But as for, why they are here, I think simply it was the way for the Mayor and powerbrokers to make a splash to make it seem like they are doing something regarding public safety, and not for the residents because honestly they [Camden residents] know better. The people who live here may not have a lot of money, but their not stupid at all. They know its not for them – and they're right.

Here, prospective resident Liev was vocal in critisizing the narrative forwarded by policymakers and the perceived realities of Camden residents. By commenting on the “window-dressing” nature in the creating of the new police force, Liev communicates the vision of a safer Camden is not for residents already living in Camden, and goes further to offer that the suspicion residents feel regarding the new police force, are correct.

Ryan, offered a different perspective on the motivation behind dismantling the CPD, and creating the Metro in its place:

It was really a dollars and cents issue in my view. I think they had to bust up the union to get out of paying those high salaries to all the older police. So this way, they could dismantle the force, avoid paying the high salaries, and start off all over again. I think they were top heavy. And understaffed. So you had high salaries, on top of the officers getting a lot more money through overtime. So this was the best way to get more bang for their buck.

While many participants in commenting about the change in policing noted racial and community relations, and changes in the creation of the new police force, Ryan noted the budgetary motivations in dissolving the old Camden police department.

Despite the recognition of the new force, Ms. Pat and Mr. Fussell questioned the effectiveness and the work ethic of the new Metro at policing the areas where new development is taking place. Ms Pat lamented:

Look where we're at. This office is on Broadway, in the heart of DOWTOWN, and all you see out here is junkies, and prostitutes. And this new police force that gets all the attention, all the press, just rides right past them as if they don't see them at all. I was walking down the street coming to work, and in an alley I saw a junkie, passed out, needle in his arm. Now, lemme tell you this, these junkies are folks not even from Camden. They're white folks from the suburbs so they're real easy to see, and the police just ride by. When they do pass out, the cops use that chemical to bring them back to life to stop them from dying [Narcan], but that's not policing. And these nasty-ass prostitutes, they're everywhere. Look outside,

go head and look! They're everywhere, and the police do nothing to stop this, and they're getting all these accolades. It's a mess

Mr. Fussell followed up by suggesting:

There's really only so much they can do. They can't go around arresting everyone all the time. They can't be everywhere at once. Residents have to draw lines in the sand and begin to stand up for their own community. I remember last week I was on Night Watch for the New Life Church right there on Stevens St. and I saw some guy selling drugs in the back alley way of the church. I go to him. Here I am, an eighty-plus year old man stepping to the young man who said he's only doing it to feed his family. I told him I understand, but he can't do that here... he moved. That's what we all have to do. Take some responsibility for our own space, especially since we know the Metro don't give a damn about the people.

Ms. Pat and Mr. Fussell, commented on the disbelief that the Camden Metro was having an impact on reducing crime and improving safety in the city. While both expressed hesitation that the new police force had in fact earned the praise and adulation it has received by remarking the lingering crime elements in the city, Ms. Pat criticized the Metro's perceived laziness in not cracking down on crimes plainly visible to people who live in Camden. Mr. Fussell believe any change in crime will be precipitated by resident's action, not a new police force.

Arrival of New Corporations in Camden

On the topic of the new industries and possibly new jobs coming to Camden, both residents and prospective residents questioned how residents were going to benefit, and who were the targeted beneficiaries. Ted questioned:

How can the Mayor say that these jobs are coming for residents when we all know most of these companies are already close by. And their employees are gonna keep their jobs. The companies like Subaru, Webimax, and Sixers are likely gonna require a college degree, so even if they say their looking to hire residents, once they put that requirement there, that's gonna disqualify a lot of people here. And they know that. That's their way of not getting us these jobs and still looking like they're trying.

Here, Ted questioned the likelihood that residents will have a real opportunity to fill the jobs that are "coming to Camden". By noting the educational requirements for most jobs in today's job market, Ted has critisized that the prerequisite for employees to have a bachelor's degree will disqualify many Camden residents, and prevent them from working with the newly arriving coporations despite the reality that jobs are physically relocating in Camden.

Gee and Mar, were also cynical of the residents' potential to land the jobs that are "coming to Camden". Gee remarked:

Camden is a black hole man. It's all a game they running on us. These jobs ain't for us...cause look...they know a lot of people, the men especially have charges on them. They got a record. The Mayor and them know as soon as we tell the employers we used to be locked up, we not gonna get hired, so here we are again, right back on the block.

Mar added:

I'm not fooled at all. They trying to get people all excited like they doing something for us. But we been here before. I bet if they do hire residents, it will

be for a bullshit job like cleaning up or security or something...like what Cambell's Soup does. Those jobs aren't available like that for one, and for two, they not for people here, who live here. We both got records, and we hard workers, just like all the people I know who was locked up. A lot of people are looking to work, forreal. But we been here before. You gotta either know someone to get a hook-up, or you ain't getting the job because you gotta record, and a lot of people don't have jobs because of their records. If they really wanted to get the men working here, they would have said, 'Even those with a record are going to get hired.'

Gee and Mar, both Camden residents who have been incarcerated voiced cynacism over the concept that Camden residents will have a fair oppurtunity to work despite the relocation of many corporations to Camden. Noting that many young men in Camden are willing to work, but may have criminal records, Gee and Mar raised the idea that in not explicitly encouraging those with criminal backgrounds to apply, employing Camden residents was not really a priority, nor a motivation in encouraging corporations to relocate to Camden.

Also on the topic of new job availability, Harry remarked:

In theory, these jobs are for residents. I mean these are oppurtunities that are geographically in Camden. But what that means for the people here is probably different. I think the educated residents will have a much easier time getting hired here with these new companies. But for the majority of reisdents, I really doubt they have a good chance of being hired at a position that offers a middle-class income.

Of concern to Harry, like other study participants was whether residents have a realistic probability of landing a job that can provide financial stability, and social mobility. He clearly differentiated jobs being “in Camden” in terms of locality, and being “in Camden” in terms of job availability for residents; of which he was highly skeptical.

Robin, was also in doubt with regards to likelihood that current residents will have real job opportunities, in part, because of residents’ questionable behaviors mentioning:

Camden is a young town. I mean really young. There are a lot of young people who are unemployed and underemployed. So a lot of kids today, and by kids I mean under forty...a lot kids can’t pass a drug screening because they smoke weed all the time. And why wouldn’t they, what real opportunity is there for kids to work here. I’m not advocating drug abuse, but what’s the motivation to not smoke weed here. And that is going to jam up a lot of people. Watch and see.

Robin focused on the use of marijuana as a recreational drug among Camden’s young residents as a likely barrier to their employment prospects with arriving corporations. Additionally, she raised the point that the historic lack of opportunity in the city, is a likely cause for what she believes is high drug abuse among the city’s youth.

Johnathan, a twenty-eight year old white male web-designer from nearby Collingswood who is considering moving to Camden mentioned:

I know all these jobs are coming to Camden, but it seems they don’t *really* to want to deal with Camden. And by that I mean the people. Look at how Campbell’s Soup, and Subaru are situated in the city. They sit right next to the main thoroughfare, Admiral Wilson [Blvd.] and they actually had the city

reconfigure the roads down there to make sure their employees can get right off the main road and pull into work, and then get right back on and get home...all without have to see a single Camden resident, or ride down any of the streets. And the company Webimax, they're in those office buildings right by the Waterfront which is monitored all the time by private security and that too is basically off-limits to residents. They're creating these corporate islands where the only people with access are those suburban whites who work for them. Honestly, we have so many corporations down there that I bet residents have no idea are even in Camden. It's gonna be the way with these new corporations coming here. But what is so interesting is that I know the jobs and the city is looking to attract young people like me to live and work here, but Camden is a super young city so there are plenty of millennials here already. But only some millennials are desired apparently.

By bringing attention to where current and arriving corporations are geographically situated, Johnathan believes these businesses are making efforts to actively avoid Camden's residents. Johnathan pointed out that some corporations that are here, are housed in areas where residents have no idea of their existence, and adjacent to busy thoroughfares that allows for easy access and exit for their suburban workers all while avoiding interacting with the city at all. Additionally, in mentioning that Camden is demographically a young city and questioning why no overt efforts were initiated to engage Camden's current millennial population, Jonathan surmises that perhaps some millennials are more desirable than others.

Tone, an unemployed black man in his late forties, and longtime Camden resident of Whitman Park was more adamant in his disbelief concerning resident's potential to land the jobs that have been touted as being "for Camden". Tone commented:

Hell no these jobs ain't for us! You know that, you not stupid! Why the hell would they provide us with jobs so that we can afford to stay here, and they can't lock us up anymore 'cause we legal. Man all this money coming here for these companies, and the Mayor or Christie didn't establish any hiring mandates demanding a certain percentage of residents are hired?...man that tells you it all right there. This shit ain't for us. Its all economics, but it's not for you or me that for goddamn sure.

In addition to clearly indicating that the relocation of jobs from surrounding suburbs to Camden are not for current residents, Tone supported his assertion by linking job availability for residents, with land occupation and the criminal justice system. Tone believes the probability of residents landing good paying jobs in Camden is low because current residents would then be able to afford to stay in the "new" Camden, which he suspects is not what policymakers want. Further, he also connected the likelihood that if residents were to secure sustainable employment, many would be incarcerated less, and in his view, is also not what policymakers want.

Liev mentioned the lack of legally binding Community Benefit Agreements [CBAs] as a sign of new businesses' tepid commitment to hire residents:

As much as we want residents hired, and as much as the Mayor says 'jobs are coming to Camden' without contractual mandates saying that in order to receive the millions in tax breaks these companies are getting, they must hire a minimum

percentage of residents, and the lack of a CBA that forces companies to meet demands of the local community in which they are situated regarding a host issues, but certainly hiring, all the proclamations of ‘jobs in Camden’ are empty promises and utterly worthless.

By pointing out the lack of CBAs mandating a minimum percentage of current Camden residents are hired in the newly arriving corporations, that alone was sufficient proof in Liev’s mind that there is no real effort to employ Camden’s citizens. He, like many others, took issue with the “jobs are coming to Camden” narrative believing it to be deliberately misleading and false.

Ryan offered a more pragmatic explanation for recent influx of corporations coming to Camden:

It was an opportunity for companies to get millions in tax breaks and for many of them, a brand new facility. No, these jobs aren’t for residents as I see it. The city clearly wants to establish a base of middle-class, and industry jobs, and sure some residents will get some jobs...But it seems pretty clear these are job opportunities for people like me... young, educated white millenials. When you look at all the things happening here now, its for our attention and consideration. And I think it’s working a little bit. I hear more and more people mentioning that their considering Camden as a place that is changing and posbilby a place they can see themselves living for a while after college. What is going to be very interesting to see is what happens after their ten-year tax holiday is up. Will they stay or wil they go somewhere else? I have my own thoughts on that.

Matter of factly, Ryan plainly concluded the newly arriving jobs are not for the people that live in Camden currently, but for suburban outsiders. He, unlike most people in the study commented that the arriving corporations along with other development is having an impact on the conversations he's had with associates concerning their potential interest in coming to live in Camden. Ryan was also wary of the possibility that the corporations that are being established in Camden through EDA tax breaks, will leave once their ten-year tax holiday concludes.

Rashawn included:

Our local government is doing its version of workforce development. The people overall say 'we need more jobs', but there's more people here that need jobs than are available. So the government says, 'Okay, we'll bring large corporations and economic opportunities that will provide jobs.' But now, all the corporations coming here are from basically around the corner. So the claim that jobs are coming to Camden is real...I'm just not seeing where jobs for residents will be available in any significant number.

Rashawn noted that most of the jobs coming to Camden with the corporations, are local jobs that are already filled. He acknowledged that jobs will be coming to Camden, but the numbers of jobs available to residents, in his estimation will be insignificant.

Of all the current residents and prospective residents interviewed, Nancy was the most optimistic, though cautiously, commenting:

I like the idea of the new businesses coming to Camden. I'm gonna try to get one of those jobs. But I'm not sure they're gonna want to hire me because I only have

a high school degree, but I'm gonna try...I don't know when or where to go when they start hiring but whatever job I can get in to, or qualify for, I'll do.

Nancy, being what she considers underemployed, looked forward to possibility for better employment in her and Camden's future. In mentioning she knows little about the jobs specifically, or how to go about securing one. Nancy conveyed the disconnect between residents and the new employment opportunities, supposedly for them.

Changes in Camden Education

Additionally, current residents and prospective residents alike took note of the talk surrounding forthcoming "new" charter schools [Renaissance Schools], along with the closing of Camden public schools. On the subject of what visible educational changes are coming to Camden, participants recognize Wilson, a thirty-seven year old black man who runs his own Camden non-profit organization first pointed out:

I noticed all these charter schools coming here all of a sudden. I mean like all of a sudden there are charter schools on every block, and they keep popping up.

There's a charter school on every block in North Camden I swear. You seen them. Mastery Charters are everywhere. Out North [Camden], out Cramer Hill, out East [Camden]...its crazy. I mean, they not building a new schools, they just taking over the buildings that used to be public schools. They took over a school where I went to elementary school, Molina. My mom used to teach there too. Now it's a Mastery Charter School. Just like that, overnight it seems like.

In noting the changes Nelson has witnessed, what stuck out most was the proliferation of charter schools around the city. What particularly stood out was that with the arrival of such charter schools, there seemed to be a conspicuous absence of new

school buildings as charter organizations have been given existing public schools and their buildings in which to operate; one of which was a school where Nelson's mother used to be a teacher.

Harry, commenting on educational changes in Camden remarked:

The charter school takeover is obvious to me because I follow education issues carefully. They trying to pop them up all over the place and close the public schools at the same time because that's what Paymon [CCSD Superintendent] is here to do...to close all the public schools and set up as many charter schools as he can, as fast as he can...then hurry up and get out of here... I also noticed all the white people the Board [CCSD] is hiring now. They got rid of all those black supervisors a couple years ago, and now they got all these young white people who live in Philly, and New York... I think they might be Teach for America or something, but now they're here getting all this bread [money] off our kids.

Harry's comments reflect an observation that charter schools are being established throughout the city in what he views as a "takeover". Further Harry suspects the closing of Camden public schools and the expansion of charter schools is the result of deliberate planning by the District's superintendent, Paymon Rouhanifard. In noting a racial element of educational changes witnessed in Camden, Harry concluded that after laying off many black supervisors and administrators, many of the new hirees employed since the state takeover in 2013 that are working in a superviory position with CCSD, are young and white, and have little connection with the Camden community.

Cordell, a college educated Parkside resident in his late thirties, works for a neighborhood development corporation. He commented:

These charters are popping up all over the place all of a sudden, at the same time they closing all these neighborhood schools. What they trying to do is force kids into these Renaissance schools, and make it seem like there's all this demand for them. Lemme say this, and this is how I know it's all bullshit... I lived here all my life, and never, ever once, did I hear anybody that lives here say, 'You know what, what we really need is more charter schools.' Never once...but here they are all of a sudden. Ever since the state took over the Governor, the Mayor, the Superintendent had one mission and that's to close our schools and set these schools up, and it has nothing to do with education really. The using our kids as...not hamsters, or gerbils...what's that little rodent called...guniea pigs [laughs]! Yeah, they using our kids like guinea pigs or lab rats where they gonna just do whatever they want, period.

Cordell, like many other study participants noted the spreading of charter schools coinciding with the closing of public schools in Camden. Holding politicians and the superintendent responsible for what he deemed "treating our kids like guniea pigs", Cordell suspects none of the educational changes occurring in Camden have anything to do with improving education or educational outcomes for Camden's children. In mentioning that he's never heard residents comment on their desire to see more charter schools in Camden. This has raised his suspicion pertaining to the motives driving such charter expansion in the city.

During the focus group with Josie, Rebecca, and Ryan, Josie commented:

I've heard alot about the events they have here in Camden regarding the arts and like children's stuff, fireworks and things... I try to promote them to people in my

building [Victor] and I've also heard alot about the new charter schools coming here... I think charter schools are okay becuae differnet students respond to different things..and I also hear the teacher-student ratio is better. I'd have to see how involved the teachers are. I think giving parents a choice is a good thing because if I'm not satisfied with where my kid is, I can try something else. But I don't think any of Camden development or education changes are benefitting the residents, or really intended to... Many people here are simply still struggling to survive, They're too stressed out and overwhlemed.”

In noting an awareness of more city events taking place, Josie also mentioned hearing about, and being aware of new charters schools coming to Camden. While commenting that having a choice in where she sends her children is important, she questions how many other residents are aware of the educational changes taking place in city on account of their being preoccupied with “surviving”.

Rebecca agreed with Josie’s statements and chimed in:

What’s happening here with education is shameful. These Renaissance schools infiltrating the city like this is ridiculous. Something like this would only happen in Camden, and only to poor black people... This would never happen in Cherry Hill or Moorestown. I mean could you imagine them trying this shit out there. All these charter schools they’re touting as the best thing since the wheel are ‘no-excuse’ charters that basically, in my view prepare kids for prison or to be low-wage functionaries... no white middle class parent would send their kids to a school like this, yet here they are all over the place in Camden...I certainly think what is happening here with education has racism written all over it.

Rebecca, for her part, views the establishing of Renaissance schools in Camden as emblematic of racism and classism in educational policy. In noting the pedagogical approach forwarded by Renaissance school operators, “no-excuses”, Rebecca believes such an approach prepares minority students for adult life in low-wage positions, or for prisons; something that would be deemed unacceptable in affluent and white communities. Rebecca is certain the expansion of Renaissance schools, and schools like it, could only happen in communities where residents are low-income, and minority.

Tone, on the subject of what educational changes he’s witnessed replied:

I know all about these new Renaissance schools...I helped bring UnCommon to our Whitman Park community. And honestly, I’m not really sold on what they’re doing but I think it represents an opportunity for our community to dictate things for our neighborhood through the CBA process. I know what they’re trying to do with these schools...set them up, close our public schools, but to me something’s gotta change for our kids, which I know they don’t give a damn about. I just figure in the meantime, maybe they’ll do something different that our public schools were doing, but if they don’t, if they don’t bargain with the community through CBAs like they said they would, then we got played. All of us, and it wouldn’t be the first time either.

Uniquely in this study, Tone, while acknowledging his skepticism that new Renaissance schools are intended to help educate Camden’s children, he nonetheless offered tepid support for the Renaissance schools because he sees potential CBAs with the schools as an opportunity for the community to have greater decision-making power in future neighborhood development. He also communicated the likelihood that

policymakers driving the expansion of Renaissance schools and the simultaneous closure of public schools, identified as “they”, “don’t give a damn about” Camden’s kids.

Nancy noticed the Renaissance schools all over the place, but was less critical than most other participants:

I was happy Mastery came to the city... not because I am anti-Camden public schools or against them or anything because I’m not. I just think the schools my son went to before he went to Mastery, and not including East Camden Middle [which is now a Mastery Middle School], they weren’t meeting his special needs accommodations well enough, no matter how much I complied... But now there’s Mastery. I don’t how well they’re gonna end up doing but...I figure, at least maybe with another kind of school, they’ll be different. I dunno really. Right now I know they’re being really nice, even though my son doesn’t like it there, they’re being real nice maybe because they’re new, but really I don’t know. It’s something different.”

With Nancy’s son attending a school that was taken over by Renaissance school operator, Mastery Charter schools, the fact that there are changes in education in Camden was obvious to Nancy. While other study participants tended to be more vocal in their criticism over the expansion of Renaissance schools, Nancy seemed to be more optimistic about the changes paying specific attention to the kindness of Mastery’s staff in dealing with her and her son’s special needs.

Mark, a white student in his mid-twenties does a lot of community engagement work in North Camden through the college he attends. He remarked:

There are Mastery Charters all over the place, and at the same time so many schools are being shut down, or co-habitated. I was working at school where Mastery took over, and lemme tell you, it was chaos. I know why there are so many Mastery schools in Hispanic areas and that's because they know the Hispanic communities tend not to be as politically active in Camden... Also they cozied up to Hispanic organizations and Bryan Morton, who is married to a [CCSD] Board member, who the Mayor appointed and voted for the Renaissance schools. They cozied up to him, he formed an organization with the help of Broad Foundation money, Parents for Great Camden Schools, and they would hold meetings with the Superintendent's Family Engagement Department and just went around knocking on doors asking people if they wanted new schools... Ofcourse people want new schools... They know Bryan runs the North Camden Little League and all, and suddenly he's the representative for the entire Hispanic community here. It was all so...astroturf. But I can tell you this, for all the schools they are setting up, the demand really isn't there. They're forcing kids into these schools by closing public schools close to Mastery schools, or letting Mastery simply take the building. But kids are leaving and enrolling in the closest public schools they can get to.

Like many other participants, Mark remarked on the expansion of the Mastery Charter network in Camden as an education most readily recognizable. Further, Mark also commented on the partnership between CCSD and pro-charter organizations and advocates, which in his view, facilitated the rapid expansion of Mastery charter schools in Hispanic neighborhoods.

On the KCNA, Ms. Pat voiced her opinion stating:

The building is beautiful. I mean look at it. But there was a public school there that was supposed to get built but for some reason never did. And it got that name Norcross on it...makes my stomach turn just thinking about that damn Norcross. All of the changes the city needs, and they put this fool's name on this building... I gotta get out here.

Ms. Pat's awareness of educational changes in Camden were not rooted in policy changes, likely due to her having adult children. Instead, she became aware of new charter schools popping up around the city by noticing the new KCNA school which sits across the street from her place of employment. Further, possessing feelings of personal animosity toward George Norcross, Ms. Pat expressed disgust that a new and beautiful school in her neighborhood bears the Norcross name attached to it.

Mr. Herrera, an unemployed Hispanic man in his early forties, lives on 5th Street, directly across from the KCNA. Recalling his experience with regard to Camden's educational changes, Mr. Herrera commented:

You should have seen all the stuff they did to me to put these trailers for these kids right here [directly next to his house]. They would ticket me and take me to court over and over again for parking my car in my yard saying I don't have a right to park it there...its in my fuckin' yard! How can't I park my car there. I lived there for over forty years, my dad bought this house...but someone somewhere decided they wanted this land. Remember when they started with all those public auctions for people houses saying they were in foreclosure. The city did that and started taking all these houses and buying them up. They wanted to

buy mine but I wouldn't sell to the them, not then. But I would today. No one is really left here. They bought out all this block, that block, and that one over there. They tried to push me around [regarding the adjacent lot] when me and my family used to cut the grass in the empty lot and all that. They didn't care then, now suddenly all these white guys in suits, and people from the city want it... I'm not mad anymore...it's not my fight anymore. I know I'm a lose. I try not to fight losing battles. And its supposed for the kids so I'm not gonna be bitter. It's a beautiful school, but there's a certain way people should treat one another. I know its all business, but still, have a heart you know what I'm sayin?

Mr. Hererra, became aware of neighborhood and educational changes in Camden through expansive land acquisition in his neighborhood, and himself, being bullied for his land by "white guys in suits". Mr. Hererra noted that many of his neighbors are no longer around, and that he's noticed more white people around. Finally, conceding defeat, and the reality that he probably won't be able to stay in his current home much longer, while commenting that he is happy there is a new school "for the kids" in the neighborhood, Mr. Hererra opted not to fight for his land and accepted that it would be a futile fight anyway.

Mr. Fussell, whose barber shop sits directly across from KCNA, did not single out education specifically as a change he wanted to discuss:

Young man listen...look around you. Change is everywhere. You can't fight it. The Native Americans had to deal with it...You think poor niggas won't have to. They can take this barber shop today if they decided it was in their best interest. All the history I have here doesn't matter...it doesn't matter. I play classical

music here, in a barber shop...in the center of Camden. Classical music...no body in here is screaming, cursing, hanging on the corner out there. We have order here, but once they decide to, it can all go away like that [snaps finger]. They'll try to buy me out, and if I say 'no', they'll simply take it from me anyway. No sense crying over it. It is what it is. I know the day is coming. They call it 'progress'...Well lemme tell you this, 'progress' here in this land [America] ain't ever been kind to Black people. So you asked about changes I see...I see the same changes you see. I been here in Camden for since the 1940's...and yeah change is happening here. But it's not for us."

Mr. Fussell also noticed educational changes in Camden through the establishing of the KCNA, which also sits across from his barbershop. He, like Mr. Hererra, noticed a change in neighborhood demographics and the likely rising of property values and taxes, and possibly even eminent domain. Where other study participants lamented educational and developmental changes in Camden, Mr. Fussell commented that "'progress' has never been kind to black people" and though he does notice changes in Camden, believes none of the changes are for the people that live here.

While both prospective and current residents remarked noticing or hearing about changes pertaining to jobs, policing, and Renaissance schools, many were questioning how current residents would benefit. In the aggregate, participants across the study surmised that widespread change is underway in Camden, but residents are not the intended beneficiaries.

Discussion of "Change is Happening Here, But it's Ain't for Us"

Change is happening in Camden (But Not for Us)

Conceptually, change in Camden was a universal observation across the study, but participants were much less clear on whether such changes were initiated to benefit current Camden residents. There is an existing body of research highlighting urban America's decades long desire to attract middle income earners and white millennials in efforts to reverse white middle-class flight which spurred urban divestment and decline in cities since the 1970's (Hyra, 2013; Smith & Stovall, 2008). Research has long identified high urban crime, lack of available jobs, high urban unemployment, and poor urban schools as barriers to urban prosperity (Bennett, 2000; Lipman, 2011; Isaacs, 2012). As Camden has a long history of being considered a dangerous and impoverished city with a poor education system (Epstein, 2015), current policies in Camden are being enacted to address the established narratives about the city.

In response to a variety of questions regarding the changes study participants recognized in Camden, the collection of responses were stratified. What was unanimous however, was the fact that all participants recognized Camden is in a period of massive evolution. Certain changes resonated and more readily identifiable to respondents than others. Some participants took note of the new Camden County Police Force, others mentioned being aware of new construction in Downtown coinciding with an awareness that corporations are currently, or will be relocating to Camden. Additionally, participants largely reported "hearing about" Renaissance schools, but older participants with adult children, were much less familiar with the specifics of charter schooling, Renaissance schools, and school choice in Camden generally. Not surprisingly, both participants who are current residents with children, and prospective residents without children, were

aware of educational changes in Camden embodied in the establishing of Renaissance schools.

While change in Camden was obvious to all participants, both current residents and prospective residents discussed how the voices and perspectives of those currently residing in Camden are frequently shut out of the decision-making processes that impact them. Although contemporary Camden changes are often reported as being “for Camden” by policy-makers and those with connections to power, to study participants, “for Camden” does not include the lower-income minority population residing in Camden, but for other people whom Camden is trying to attract. As a result, despite the established imperative to address the city’s issues involving security, joblessness, and education, by marginalizing residents from decision-making processes that determine how to best address Camden’s pressing needs, change in Camden, from study participants, is seen as something that is happening *to* residents, not *for* residents.

CHAPTER 7

THE INFLUENCE OF OUTSIDERS AND GEORGE NORCROSS

Throughout this research study, participants were asked a variety of questions relating to their ability to be recognized and engaged in decision-making relating to education and redevelopment in Camden. Questions like, “If you had a concern regarding education, who would you take your concern to?”, “If you had a suggestion about what development or kind of school you wanted in your neighborhood, who would you go to?”, and, “Who in Camden politics, or who in the Camden public education system do you believe listens to what you or your neighbors think?”, were posed to probe the degree to which residents and prospective residents believe they are included in decisions that impact their community. While some participants verbally expressed the willingness to take concerns to “the Mayor’s office” [one day], others guessed if warranted, they’d “go to the superintendent”, all participants confessed they hadn’t actually taken those steps.

Throughout the portion of questions dedicated to who participants believed make education-related and redevelopment-related decisions in Camden, residents often referred to an unspecified “they”, or participants referenced an array of policymakers from city Councilpersons to Governor Christie. The most common name participants associated with recent redevelopment and Renaissance schools in Camden was NJ Democratic powerbroker, George Norcross III.

Robin, when asked, what is motivating the sudden educational changes in Camden remarked:

I think its Camden business as usual. I’m kinda like, I’m not a conspiracy theorist or anything. But im starting to become one. But I’m thinking there’s always a

reason... There's always a reason why things happen here. I might not see it the first year, the second year, but years down the line, you're gonna see it. It's the reason we have that [County] trash to steam plant [in Camden]. Somebody gave the city gobs of money, there was a huge budget gap, and caput...it's the same reason we had the prison on the Waterfront. And there's a ton of money to be made from a poor city. Tons of money. And I think this is part of it. I would love to think, like all these business coming to Camden, that its to turn this city around, but I can't honestly see how its gonna help the residents. If they had no help in the process... You know what it is, it is something that I have seen over and over and over again in this city. You get a whole bunch of outsiders coming in, and telling us what we need, whats good for us, what's gonna save us, what's gonna be good for the city, and its nothing but empty promises. It's kinda like what we talk about in the city all the time, it's the carpetbaggers coming in. And this Renaissance project really smacks of that. What you gotta realize, and what gets completely swept under the rug is how Norcross benefits. For one, his brother Phillip wrote the damn bill, it wasn't Donald... So Phillip wrote the bill, Donald sponsered it in the Assembly, it passes, and then goes to the Senate where their boy [Steve] Sweeney is the Senate President. The bill was gonna pass easily...but what this really is about, all this county police force business and all these Renaissance schools is about is insurance contracts for Norcross' insurance firms. You know that's how he got rich, through public contracts. So now, do the math with all these new schools coming here, this new police force, how much money does that generate for him?

Of concern to Robin, here, was the influence of outsider policymakers who aren't necessarily in touch with the voices and desires of Camden residents. Specifically, Robin suspects many of the changes taking place in Camden are conneted and coordinated efforts to benefit local political actors, specifically referencing George Norcross as the primary planner and beneficiary of recent education and developmental changes.

Gee, though admitting "I don't know about all the political stuff that goes on here", continued:

Here's what I do know... that white dude Norcross owns this city. All this.

Cooper Hospital, the politicians, all them. And one of the politicians that work for him is my boy I used to play ball with. But now he's joined the darkside with them...Norcross and them.

Gee's comments, though confessing his limited knowledge of local politics, demonstrates how widespread the influence of George Norcross is known among the Camden public. Commenting that Norcross "owns the city" speaks to the understanding many residents in Camden have pertaining to Norcross and decision-making power in the city.

Discussing politics and resident engagement, Tone contributed:

None of this stuff is Dana's [Mayor Redd] doing. She has no real power. She's simply a figure head like Faison [former mayor Gendolyn Faison] used to be. She couldn't stop none of this shit if she tried...actually if she tried, Norcross would have her pushed right out. So what choice does she have really? Be a Mayor of Camden, or cross Norcross, and struggle like everyone else here. That's not really a choice...Plus add to the fact she owe her whole working career to him. She

never had a job that wasn't connected to Norcross in some way, and what that does is make it so she kinda feels that she's in debt to him, and owes him, so you know...when it comes to Camden, what Norcross wants, Norcross gets. Seriously, now that I'm thinking about it, everything that happens in Camden, this dude [Norcross] seems to benefit. When you saw money spent here, or anything big happen here, that he did not have a hand in? You know that light they have on Mickle Blvd., and that opening to allow cars to turn left and head into the Hospital, that was put there because his daughter got hit by a car around there. So think about that, all the time kids get hit by cars in Camden, what do we get? Nothing. His daughter gets bumped by a car, and the whole design of a county road in Camden gets changed. That just shows how much power that dude has.

Tone's comments reflects a sentiment that is often repeated in the city – that the Mayor is not deciding or operating independently, or on behalf of her constituents, but instead her political benefactor, George Norcross. His anecdote pertaining to Norcross having the power to, supposedly, alter the configuration of a county road in Camden reflects the political stature residents believe Norcross wields in Camden.

Rashawn, who confessed to having more ability to connect more with those in power due to his past involvement in city politics, and establishing a non-profit organization with the purpose of getting young people involved in politics to “influence policy”. Rashawn, concerning the way decisions impacting Camden are made, commented:

First of all, you have to understand Dana [Redd] is an extreme introvert. She doesn't engage with the community at all. So if the community had concerns or

ideas, one, she's not going to listen, and two, it can be argued, she's never really been exposed to dissent because of how isolated she keeps herself. But in reference to all these changes, ofcourse all of the development, and formation of the charter [Renaissance] schools are interr-related... These ideas all come out of the same office. These folks all get together at James Beach's office on Rt. 70 in Cherry Hill, the Norcorsses, Susan Bass Levin, [Camden County Executive James] Capelli and these folks and they lay out their plans for Camden... Camden is an oligarchy where only a small group of powerful people run the government and what happens in it. And, for better or worse, the public school system with the takeover and mayoral appointments are now part of that machine... The Renaissance school plan is cetainly part of their plan. What is so different about what is happening now is that there is so much organization and unity in vision between Norcross, City Hall, city council, and the schools [CCSD]. And right or wrong. There is no dissesnt. Any deviation from his [Norcross'] plan will have them not in their positions long.

Rashawn's comments reflects a belief many residents in the city have regarding decision-making power in the city – that residents have little power, if any. By specifically namng prominent actors in Camden poilitics, referencing where Rashawn believes the meetings concering Camden take place, in Cherry Hill, the belief that outsiders run Camden politics was apparent to many study particiants.

Harry, at the questioning of how decisions get made here in Camden, and who makes such desicions became visibily animated before commenting:

You see me and my team out here in these streets protesting for everything from clean parks, fair sentencing, our police department, our schools and all that! People always say ‘in Camden people don’t care. Residents don’t care about this and that’...but that’s bullshit. It really is, and it really pisses me off! There’s so many organizations here trying to improve the community...trying to get heard so we can get things done for our neighborhoods and our babies out here. But you know, unless you kiss King George’s [Norcross] ring, you not getting’ shit. You see us! We out here! We know our shit, we got parents, we got residents, we got the kids, we got people in the hoods. I’m out here organizing...getting people together. But I’m not down with them! Forreal, George reached out to me a couple of times because of the heat we bringing...and he thinks I’m like all the rest of these sellouts here...that if he just gives me a position I’ll shut up and join his team. That’s not to say I couldn’t use the money. My lights been cut off...my phone been cut off...I gotta ask my people for food some nights and all that...but I’m not ever going that route. The Lord got me...my people got me. We coming for George’s ass!

Harry’s comment reflected a clear disdain, not only for “King” George Norcross and his influence in Camden, but also of his tactic of co-opting city residents to work on his behalf. That Norcross weilds incredible influence in Camden was an understood fact to Harry, but his willingness to resist Norcross, and referencing his own activism demonstrates some city residents have grown tired of having Norcross, and other outsiders dictate the direction of Camden’s future.

Shaheed expressed the degree to which he believe George Norcross dictated the changes in education and development in the Downtown neighborhoods, and pending changes for Haddon Ave. Shaheed asserted:

Man, look at this way. For one, the whole Renaissance argument was bullshit and lemme tell you why...if is so clear that these schools are doing so well, or are so effective as all these people are claiming... Paymon, the Mayor, Norcross and all them, and if they really cared about these [public] schools, tell me, why wouldn't they just remodel what they do after all these KIPPs, UnCommons, and Mastery(s) then. It would be way easier than to start up all these new schools right? They wouldn't have to do all the building they're supposed to do because the schools are already here. But they not doing that. Why? Because all this shit has nothing to do with improving schools for our kids... Nothing at all. But what this is about is getting money in the hands of the few, where they can control where it goes and who gets it. That's the way Norcross does his thing and keeps his power. He orchestrated all this. All this you see here with schools...all that stuff you see Downtown. Tell me what you see Downtown, that's new, that he doesn't benefit from? Everything that is built or redeveloped down there, he has a hand in. And they calling for expanding what's happening Downtown, through all this here [Haddon Ave.]. Haddon Avenue is gonna be turned into the 'medical mile'. They already brought up a whole lot of properties here and gonna either expand the [Cooper] Hospital campus down here, or clean it up for the employees. Niggas is through here, watch.

Shaheed pointed to Norcross' connection to Cooper Hospital, and its expanding footprint in Downtown Camden to illustrate his influence in contemporary Camden developmental changes. Further, Shaheed's assertion that the establishing of Renaissance schools has "nothing to do with improving education" along with the belief many properties on Haddon Avenue have been purchased by Cooper, fueled his belief that many Camden residents will no longer be able to live in the city in the future.

Ms. Clancy, an African-American nursery school teacher in her mid-fifties and current resident, offered:

I really don't residents are listened to at all. We don't make decisions. Sure, the Mayor holds what she calls 'community meetings' but when you go, all you see are the same Democratic Machine people. You see the Minister [Wasim Muhammed], you see Council-people, and some people she appointed to the Board of Education...and they fill the room so it looks like the community is there and supporting whatever she, or Norcross, decides. It makes me so angry. I really lost a lot of respect for Dana [Mayor Redd] over the years with the way she's just laying down and either doing whatever Norcross wants her to do, or demanding she do. I mean, what grown-up is going to allow themselves to be used like this? I've been hearing about Norcross for a long time now, and honestly, I really didn't believe one man had so much power here. People used to talk about him like he's a boogeyman or something...like he was some guy, you know, who's some emperor or something...but now, honestly, I'm starting to understand what people were saying. I believe it. That white guy, who's not from here, runs this city...that's crazy ain't it?

Like many other study participants, Ms. Clancy asserted George Norcross “runs the city”, but what stood out was the folklore-ish nature by which she had come to know of Norcross. In explaining that her father had been telling her about the influence George Norcross has in Camden suggests Norcross has been a prominent figure in Camden politics for decades.

In separate interviews, Tone, Salaam, and Nelson expressed similar sentiments acknowledging Norcross’ dictating of, and benefit in, recent changes in Camden, and his omnipresence in Camden politics, but offered alternative perspectives by blaming Camden residents for Norcross’ ascension, and imploring residents to take ownership of their city.

On the topic, Tone mentioned:

We can’t accept this...this white dude [Norcross] controlling our city of all black and brown people like this. This ain’t the 1800’s. But where were our men...the people who are supposed to be men anyway. When we should have been taking care of our families, looking after the next generation...looking after the hoods we claim to love so much, what was we doing? Dealing in drugs...getting locked up, and I was part of the problem myself...but what happens to communities when the men aren’t fulfilling their responsibilities? They get destroyed, and fall victim to someone else’s vision. And right now, the city represents Norcross’ vision. You know how much money that man makes off us? The supposed poorest city in the country? So while we don’t like the shit he does and all that, we also, if we’re men, have to take responsibility for our role in this. We haven’t

been the men we're supposed to be...so that gotta change. We can't walk around with our heads down...we gotta kick up.

Salaam echoed similar sentiments:

I can't really be too mad at Norcross and them...A lot of what goes on in Camden is our own fault. How many of us vote? How many of us take responsibility for kids that may not be our own, but are part of our families, or live on our block. I took in my little brother 'cause my sister was in no position to raise him. I raised him since he was a baby. He's like my second son really. I made my mistakes, got locked up and all that, but the reality is I wanted better for my wife and my family than what I was giving a long time ago. We black men gotta start having higher standards for ourselves and our children. We do that, won't no one like Norcross or whoever will be able to dictate what goes on in our communities like he does.

Nelson remarked:

So many of us complain about what the Mayor's not doing, and Norcross controlling things and all that, but in reality, we not kids. We have to take responsibility for what is going on. What kinda man looks for other people to take care of their needs...someone who is not a man. I think if everyone did their part, and were driven by a purpose, and put away all that pettiness, and were able to sit down, put our egos aside and all that, we'd be okay. Thing of it is, it's not that people aren't willing to work for their city...in my phone, I got a thousand numbers of people who work in the city, have their organizations and all that, but for some reason, we can't bring it all together. Everyone starts worrying about who's in charge, who's making decisions, who's getting money, who's getting in

good with the powerful...and with that, visions die. If we unified, if simply put our egos aside, Norcross wouldn't be an issue at all. But because we can't or don't unify, Camden stays the way it is, and we're left basically begging for the scraps Norcross decides to throw at us.

The comments made by Tone, Salaam, and Nelson, particularly hold Camden residents responsible for the ascension and sustaining of power possessed by outsiders, and George Norcross specifically. Where many study participants communicated frustration and exasperation with feeling like objects to be manipulated at Norcross' whim, the comments made by Tone, Salaam, and Nelson communicate complicity on behalf of the Camden community in Norcross' rise to power; with the men in Camden, in their eyes bearing specific culpability. What's more, they seem to suggest the influence Norcross wields is not omnipotent, or even guaranteed, but largely is sustained through the lack of organized or unified resistance from the community.

Current residents were not the only participants who noted the influence of Norcross in contemporary Camden redevelopment and education decisions, and the marginalization of residents.

Rebecca commented:

To me, Norcross is evil and he's a bully. He knows that Camden mostly consists of low-income minorities...and that that combination usually yields a constituency who is purposely and structurally disenfranchised and easily preyed upon. These Renaissance schools, on of which he has the gall to put his name on, is a kind of school he would never send his own children to. If I'm not mistaken he sent his daughter to Lawrenceville Prep, one of the most expensive and

liberal schools in the Northeast, but what schools is he advocating for Camden's black and brown children? Authority train, no-excuse schools... That's racist as hell and everytime I think of it, it makes my blood boil... I can literally feel myself getting angry just talking about it right now.

Rebecca's remarks cast Norcross as a bully to Camden's low income minority population who, largely, do not have the political or economic capital to battle against Norcross and other policymakers' wishes. Further, Rebecca pointed out the hypocrisy in Norcross and others' trumpeting Camden's Renaissance schools in that he, according to her understanding, sent his children to the most exclusive and liberal schools in the area; the very antithesis of what Camden's low-income black and Hispanic children will get in their "no-excuses" Renaissance schools.

In a separate interview, Liev stated:

Of course Norcross has everything to do with what is going on here right now. Nothing happens here without his say-so. In a way I kind of feel the Mayor is getting a bad rap, because how much power does she really have? I've studied post-Katrina New Orleans earlier, so I have seen corrupt politics, and seen populations like Camden's oppressed and victimized by power, but in Camden, it is so much more concentrated, and so in your face. Here, in Camden, if you want to get ahead. your only choice, like one made by a new young Assemblyman, is to get down with Norcross, or fight back and get nothing.

In Liev's comments, he noted the difference in Camden's political realities as compared to a much larger urban city with a reputation of corruption – New Orleans. In remarking that Camden's corruption is so blatant and so concentrated, and oversaw by

Norcross, Liev, a prospective resident who has not been in Camden long, has become a witness to what Camden residents have come to know as their political reality in the city.

Another prospective resident, Ryan, responded:

Norcross looms large in all of this. Nothing here happens without his approval. And theres certainly a race element to this. People in minority communities, especially if they are low-icome get ignored and disregarded unlike any other community. I guess they feel the ‘ends justify the means’ but I really doubt it. Clearly they are trying to make Camden more suitable for white millenials like myself... It’s funny for all these years, these folks are always saying a flood of new money coming to Camden is always going to help the city, when in reality, it miraculously always seems to benefit King George [Norcross].

Mark mentioned:

Well, Norcross is the designer, or the architect in Camden planning, but he delegates who is going to do what. So like, for instance, Lou Capelli, the presiding Freeholder is like the face of the new County Police Department...so whenever there is good press about the police, he’ll be giving the interviews and statements, and also will always put a positive spin on the Metro. He had his brother [Donald] and Wilson [Assemblyman] and Fuentes [Assemblyman] be vocal for the Hope Act and Renaissance schools. But also check this out, Wilson’s wife is also an appointed member of the Camden Board of Education, and also is a member of the [Camden County] Democratic Committee, along with other Boardmembers, Burley, Felicia Morton, and I think one other person...They are all mayoral appointees, and Camden Democratic Committee members who

are all friendly with the Mayor's and Norcross' education agenda. I mean the level of organization is unreal. So to your question, are residents listened to, or who listens to residents, I say absolutely not. The only residents who are listened to, are those who are already 'in' with them [politicians].

Prospective residents Ryan's and Mark's respective comments identified Norcross as the common beneficiary of contemporary education, public safety, and development changes in Camden. Additionally, they both pointed out that only people connected to the Norcross machine, and George Norcross himself, have the ability to influence what takes place in Camden – not Camden's residents.

While most participants agreed that residents' voices are not included in planning and decision-making pertaining to Camden development and education decisions, most participants, current and prospective residents, pointed to local politicians as the decision-makers. Further, many participants noted that many Camden politicians are functioning at the behest of political powerbroker George Norcross III. Interestingly, however, no Hispanic study participant mentioned Norcross at all in this, or any portion of their focus group or individual interview.

Discussion of the Influence of Outsiders and George Norcross

Pertaining to questions inquiring who makes decisions in Camden, how decisions are made in Camden, and whether residents have influence over decisions that are made in Camden, overwhelmingly participants who are current and prospective Camden residents reported feeling that residents have no influence over what decisions get made in Camden. Moreover, most respondents when discussing decision-making, commonly referred to an unidentified "they", with "they" being described as people with power who

make decisions, who, not surprisingly, are not residents of Camden. “They” was a term used by prospective residents and current residents to describe varying politicians like Governor Chris Christie, Camden Mayor Dana Redd, Camden city council, and also, among participants who are Camden residents, “they” also was used to refer to white suburbanites who, the participants believe, are trying to come back to Camden.

Urban low-income minority residents, as extensive literature suggests, often have little formal power in influencing policy that impacts their own communities (Dixon, Buras & Jeffers, 2013). Increasingly however, in contemporary neoliberal urbanism, power is concentrated among those with affluence and influence, and less among the public (Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009). In urban America, democracy and engagement of the public is circumvented and seen as a hurdle to progress and to be avoided (Lipman, 2013).

Additionally, across participants, the singular name most associated with spearheading contemporary Camden change, and identified as a clear beneficiary of the enacted changes involving corporate relocations and education was George Norcross. Largely, George Norcross is seen as the individual who makes the decisions in Camden, which are facilitated by a roster of emissaries that include his brother Donald Norcross, the New Jersey Assembly Democrats, and Mayor Redd. While some respondents posit profit as the motivation behind Norcross’ involvement in Camden, others theorize Norcross seeks to gain greater political power, or a combination of both. To support their claims, participants pointed to the connections that Norcross has with Cooper Hospital and their current expansion, the hospital’s affiliation with the Cooper Rowan Medical

School, and the name of the Renaissance school, KCNA, as evidence of Norcross' apparent influence in driving current changes in Camden.

What emerged from this study, from both current and prospective residents, is that Camden residents are seen to have little power in, and over, their own city, and that power rests either in the hands of the few policy-makers connected to power, or in the hands of one man – George Norcross.

CHAPTER 8

PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL CHOICE IN
CAMDEN

As charters enrollment in Camden continues to rise, and with the pending arrival of up to fifteen new Renaissance schools, discourse hailing the presence of “school choice” and “high quality options for parents” is a frequent refrain employed to explain the necessity, and spreading, of charter schools in Camden. In a city eight square miles, with 77,000 people and roughly 15,000 public school students, Camden’s thirty-nine public, charter, and Renaissance schools would seem to represent ample education options for Camden’s families; still, the call for more options is put forward. Additionally, the call for greater school choice in Camden from policymakers frequently is accompanied by the accusation of “failing” Camden public schools as the motivator driving parental demand for charter schools.

That Camden schools are failing to educate children, and that parents are unsatisfied with Camden’s schools, is an assumption that is rarely challenged or explored in-depth. During the study, participants were asked their views concerning Camden’s public schools, what they want to see in a “good” school, and why Camden parents send their children to non-public schools in Camden.

**Current Residents’ Perceptions of Camden Public Schools Based on Past
Experiences and Hearsay**

Ted, an attendee of Camden public schools throughout his schooling experience commented:

Honestly, I can say I had a great time here in Camden [public] schools. From [Forest Hill] elementary, to Hatch [Middle School], to my days here at the High [Camden High School], I think I learned a lot. I had teachers that cared like Mr. Joy, Coach Lawrence...they looked out for me, and coaches too. They had a lot of programs like CHIPS (Camden City Honors Intermediate Program for Scholars), in middle school, IPLE (Institute for Political and Legal Education) and Model Congress, DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America), and ofcourse sports. I can say, if you were focused on your work, Camden schools were good for you. But obviously, there were a lot of distractions too. You could easily get sucked up in the stuff involving the streets that would, you know, have you not doing the things you were supposed to be focusing on in terms of school. It kinda seems like a lot of stuff has changed in Camden schools though. I don't know if the kids are different...like they are more grown, or disrespectful, or maybe the schools don't have all the programs they used to...I really don't know, maybe its just that I'm older and looking at things little difference. I definitely remember the adults in the school that would look out for the kids who you know, might need a ride home, need some money for lunch, or clothes or something like that...that happened a lot. But now, anytime I see something written about Camden [public] schools it's always about how low the schools score on the [state standardized] tests...But I admit I'm not really up on the issues like that to be honest.

Reflecting back on his days in Camden schools, which are often portrayed negatively in local media and by local politicians, Ted shared an alternative viewpoint based on his experiences. Commenting on the variety of enrichment programs, in

addition to caring staff that, in his view, went above and beyond for students, Ted's views on public education in Camden were overwhelmingly positive.

Ms. Yancey, who attended Camden schools all her life commented:

There was a time where I considered sending my son to a school outside of the Camden public system because...I dunno, you keep hearing about how bad our schools are. But then I really started having second thoughts about that. 'Should I really believe all that is written about our schools, when I'm the one who went to them?' They served me and my family well for all these years. So, then I decided to send him to Met East [High School] because I heard a lot of great things about their principal Timothy Jenkins. He's a young guy, from Camden, and even graduated from Camden High. The fact that one of ours... he's from Centerville, made it and became a principal of a school in his hometown meant a lot to me. He's a young guy too...a young black man, from Camden that became a principal?! That's all I needed to see. It means a lot to me to see someone who looks like us, and from here leading a school. You don't see that much nowadays here in our schools. I sent my son there, and never looked back. My son graduated and applied, and got accepted in to Rutgers, and he's in his second year now.

That Ms. Yancey attended Camden public schools herself, and that a school she considered "good" hired a black male who is native to Camden to head the school, was a major consideration in Ms. Yancey keeping her son in Camden's public schools. She commented that she does not believe the negative portayals about Camden's public schools because of her own personal, and her families experiences there. She readily commented that her son thrived at a local Camden public high school where he

graduated, and is now attending college. Ms. Yancey's narrative conflicts with how local media and policymakers commonly cast Camden's schools - as failing institutions.

Leonard, a professional black man in his mid-fifties, and resident of Parkside, also attended Camden public schools all his life before graduating and going off to college.

Leonard offered:

Before all this new testing crap, you know ...where tests became the barometer of success in education and all these charter schools became *en vogue*, and certainly when I was coming along, and while my daughters went through school here, Camden schools were excellent in my view. Look at all the successful people you had come through here. We had astronauts, scientists, Grammy award winners, NBA and NFL players...what other city, this size especially, has so many successful people come out of its schools? Now all of a sudden they wanna talk about how bad our schools are? How do those people think all those successful people got that way? They came through our schools, and our teachers taught them."

Leonard, criticized the current education reform movement that calls for greater reliance on standardized tests as proof of learning, and charter schools as supposedly the answer to improve education in urban areas, specifically Camden. Not only did Leonard reflect on his days in Camden schools, and his children's there as well, he also mentioned the bevy of "successful" people who came through Camden schools as well. He went further to credit the Camden school system and their teachers for yielding such successful individuals.

Rita, of Whitman Park, is a retired black woman in her mid-fifties. She echoed similar sentiments:

I went to Camden schools all my life, and so did my kids. I could have sent them to one of these charters they have around here, but I chose to send them to Camden public schools where I went and where I know I have power to get things done if I need to. I know the staff, the teachers, the security officers, and the principals...hell, a lot of them went to school with me...so if I ever have to go up there, they know me and I know them. But Camden schools were fine schools for me and my children. They all graduated and all could have gone to college if they felt like it...and I'm a tell you this, the Camden schools would not be in the situation they are in if they hadn't decided to break the schools up. They [Board of Education] called themselves being cute and trying to be like the suburban schools by starting these little magnet schools...Medical Arts [High School], Creative Arts [Morgan Village Academy], and Met East [High School]...And what that did was send all the best and brightest students in the city that would have gone to Camden High or Woodrow Wilson [High] to these others schools. Those schools do well on tests, and they graduate all their kids...and what are the two other [comprehensive] high schools left with? Pretty much the 'everyone else's'. And with that what happened? Camden High's and Woodrow Wilson's tests scores and graduation rates dropped immediately and everyone here is acting like they don't know how the hell it happened. And here were are, got the state on our backs for a problem we had a lot to do with creating with that decision to break up the schools. We'd never be in the position we're in now.

Initially focusing on the tradition she and her family have in Camden's schools, Rita turned her attention to contemporary criticisms of Camden's schools that she believes are misleading, and the result of bad decisions by the former Camden School District. She believes if the comprehensive high schools were never fragmented to form the collection of magnet schools in Camden, graduation rates and tests scores, two prominent metrics cited to lampoon the city's school system, would be much higher demonstrating the true effectiveness of Camden's schools.

Tone, in explaining experience and impressions with Camden's schools was more complicated in commenting:

Man, I'm a tell you this...I had some excellent teachers...some that really cared about me and reached into my life...like Mr. White from Hatch. At times when he could see I was going through things, especially as I got to 8th grade, he really put a lot of energy into me at a very crucial time in my life. But, just like I had some good experiences, I also had some bad ones as well at the High [Camden High School] too...The principal had it out for me. Somehow he heard that I was sellin' [drugs] and on my word I wasn't. I hung out wth people that did, they was from my hood and some were my cousins but back then, I wasn't. Well, long story short, he expelled me...for selling drugs, which I wasn't, but after getting kicked out, ironically, that's when I started...So I guess I have bittersweet thoughts about Camden schools based off my experience. My daughter graduated from Wilson, and my other two kids with to school outside of Camden, but I was locked up during those years so it was really kinda outta my hands then.

Tone's comments reveal the reality that not everyone who attended Camden's schools were satisfied with the result. While he did acknowledge some teachers in his past who did have a prominent impact on his school career, Tone indicated that the most consequential interaction with his high school principal resulted in him being pushed out of school and, for him, resulting into a life of crime.

Mr Rivera contributed his perceptions of Camden schools:

Well, first thing, for me, I was the first in my family to graduate high school. I graduated from Camden High, went to Morgan Village for middle school, and went to Lanning Square for elementary. But yeah I was the first to graduate and my parents, especially my dad, was so proud man...I remember the great teachers I had at Morgan Village...I think her name was Ms. Carter. We was suppose to special education, most of the people I was with, I think for the most part, was because English was not our first language and we didn't speak English too well...but Ms. Carter was on us. She said, 'there's nothing wrong with yall. I'm gonna teach you scholars like I would teach kids in CHIP.' ...and she did. We used to read all the time...we had class in the library and the other kids who used to look down on us saw we were smart. My grades shot up! I rose about three grade levels that year, and going into Camden High, I was near the top of the class. I was excited to be going to Camden High. When I was small, that was all I ever thought about...going to the High, and playing football for the High. We a great basketball team, a good football team...and I was briefly recruited to go to Temple, but ended up going to Rowan University instead...I didn't finish, but I graduated high school and went to college. My only complaint with high school

was that I didn't take it as serious as I should have. I thought it was all about football, parties, girls...and I ended up not making the most of my experience. My coaches were warning me....my teachers were warning me...but I was young and stupid. I thought I was grown.

In commenting about education in Camden and his experiences in them, Shaheed added:

Camden schools was cool for me and all my family basically, which is why I'm fine sending my kids to Camden schools. You hear people saying stuff about the schools and what not, but I look at it like this, Camden schools will give your kids exactly what you and your kid put into it. If you care about your kids grades, and your kids take their education seriously, they will do well, go on to college and live their lives. But if you, as a parent want to sit back, not show up to conferences, never ask [your kid] about homework, and basically just chill...whatever happens to your kids while in schools is your fault. The teachers are here to help, and they are here...but parents have to do their part. My son is about to go to college and graduate with honors...I went here and graduated and went to college and graduated...his mother went here and graduated and studying to be a nurse now...Basically, Camden schools will be what you make it, just like life.

Mr. Rivera and Shaheed's comments add nuance to overly-simplistic categorizations of Camden schools as either educational panaceas or wastelands. In their view, everything any student would need to be successful academically are readily available in Camden schools, along with potential distractions. In referencing their own

academic missteps and successes, neither Mr. Rivera nor Shaheed plaed blame on Camden schools or teachers for the shortcomings they or other encountered, but placed most of the responsibility on the actions and decision of individuals instead.

Among those current residents participating in the study, seventeen spent time in Camden public schools. Overall, participants with experience in Camden schools formed their opinions about Camden public schools, primarily based off their own experiences in Camden schools, and the experiences of their children. The remaining current residents that participated in the study, though having permanent residency in Camden, did not attend Camden public schools. As such, these residents' perceptions of Camden schools are drawn primarily from their own perceptions, and hearsay which were comparatively, much more negative. Robin shared her views of Camden's public schools:

Well, I actually didn't attend school here because originally I'm from Warminster, PA...forreal, I used to live on a farm...with horses, cows, all that...I know you don't believe me, or asking yourself how this white girl go from a farm in PA to living in Camden [laughter], but its true. But I think about Camden schools, and this is from my time working with kids that go to some of these schools...Oh my God, I went to too many board of education meetings, wasted too much of my time there. But I work closely with the schools, especially with the high schools and I know they're in bad shape...I really think they are in a state of disrepair. The realist in me says that public schools cannot continue the way they are. I've had many conversations with the current superintendent, and I found him very engaging, very informed. So far I think he's pretty honest. I told him, 'your not gonna fix this in a year, this is decades of incompetence,

mismanagement.’ But when you’re looking at a sixty-six percent drop out rate at Camden High, how do you think your gonna fix that by changing the façade, I mean its not...it can’t continue on the way it is.

Robin’s comments reflect a common thread in the popular narrative surrounding Camden’s schools; the citing of deplorable statistical metrics as proof of Camden public school failures, and the idea that the schools, as a system is irredeemable. Additionally, at the the thought of Camden schools, what stood out most to Robin were negative perceptions like, “disrepair”, “mismanagement” and “incompetence.”

Rashawn, a graduate of Pennsauken schools, and son of a Camden public school teacher echoed concerns about Camden’s public schools:

I think that Camden public schools are a mess... Too many people Downtown (Central Administration Building) who are incompetent have been promoted to positions they don’t deserve because they know someone else. The Special Needs Department, the guidance departments are dysfunctional...you’ve seen the Boardmembers. Some are so unorganized, they don’t read reports closely, they don’t ask questions at all. I remember they were going to renew a multi-million dollar contract to an assistant superintendent’s mother for a program without any proof at all that the project was working at all... The 100 Book Challenge...I mean it’s ridiculous...there’s no soap, and no toilet paper in our bathrooms. I honestly think that education has been used too much as a political football here.

Rashawn in commenting on the Camden schools dedicated more of his attention to mechanics and sartorial needs of the district, which, to be sure, are to be considered when judging the effectiveness of any system. Ignoring completely in-class elements of

education like pedagogy, teacher quality, and school-community relationships, Rashawn's focus on adults in supervisory positions demonstrates that some members of the Camden public's perceptions of Camden's public schools are formed by making determinations about the District's leadership and management, and not necessarily what is or is not happening in the classroom.

Ms. Nancey, originally from Camden, but grew up in Florida before returning to Camden late in her early twenties commented:

I hear Camden public schools are violent. Both my sons, before my youngest all graduated from Woodrow Wilson [High School]. One went into the Army and the other is in the Coast Guard now. But my youngest, he went to East Camden Middle before it got taken over by Mastery and he used to tell me about fights that happened in the school. And you see it...on like Facebook, or on the news, you see fights all over the place, not so much in the schools, though he [youngest son] tells me when there are fights in the school. But I figure, if people fight out here in the streets, and go to a certain school, it only makes sense that the school would be violent too, because that's where those kids go [to school].

While referencing that one of her sons attended and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School, a city public school, Ms. Nancy, though not an attendee herself, did have experience with success in Camden's public schools through her son. That notwithstanding, she was concerned with what she believed to be an increase in neighborhood violence, and concluded that Camden schools would also be violent because of what she sees on Facebook, and assumptions that the children she sees fighting in the streets attend the city's public schools.

Tina, adding her views of Camden public education remarked:

I don't personally know much about Camden schools because I'm not actually from here. I grew up in Wildwood and lived in New York before I came here to Camden. I hear these schools are terrible...just look at the test scores. I remembered I heard someone say at the High, only three people graduated. That's crazy! How can anyone tolerate only three people graduating out of an entire high school. Then I heard the Governor on the news say only three people in the entire graduating class in Camden schools last year were college-ready. The people in those schools there must not be doing shit.

Though having little direct experience with, or knowledge of, Camden's public schools Tina's views on Camden's public schools were almost entirely based on statistics she's heard or come across somehow. Further, despite not being from Camden, and having no children who attended Camden public schools, Tina's personal assessment of the quality of public schools in Camden was still, nonetheless, cemented as terrible places with the "adults must not be doing shit."

Prospective Residents' Perceptions of Camden Schools

Among the prospective Camden residents' perceptions of Camden, it appeared to be more open-ness to the idea of sending their children to Camden public schools, and at the same time expressed reservations. Josie mentioned:

I'm certainly open to sending my eventual son to a Camden public school. I mean, that's where all the people in his neighborhood will probably go to, and I want him to get along with everyone. I'm from here, and have family here, but at the same time, I work at a university, and live in the Victor. I don't wanna raise a son

that doesn't know how to get along with other kids from the hood, you know [laughs]? I'm a Latina from North [laughs] and so I feel comfortable no matter where I'm at here...but then again I was raised by a single mom who didn't make a lot of money. But me and my fiance', we do pretty well for ourselves financially, so my kids won't have the same point of neighborhood connectivity that I did. We're very middle class I guess you could say. But if there is a problem with public schools, I like the idea that I have options as to where I can send him if the need arises.

In looking back on her own days in Camden's public schools, her coming of age in North Camden, and her current reality as a middle-class millennial living in a overwhelmingly white neighborhood in Camden, Josie mentioned feeling a sense of conflict with respect to where she would send her child to school. Expressing that attendance in local public schools could be an effective means by which her child could connect with other minority children, and develop relationships with children from different economic background, Josie still expressed concerns about Camden's public school quality, but also expressed a preference to send her children to public schools.

Johnathan had a completely different perspective on the matter completely: I would send my hypothetical kids to any public school here because that's how you become part of the community, primarily through schools during childhood. I know he or she would probably be the only white kids in the building, but honestly, it probably would do wonders for their worldview...to be white, and educated in Camden with Camden kids...how many white kids experience that? The reality is, with my occupation, and my wife's money its not really too much

of a concern thankfully, but I don't want my kid to grow up to be a suburbanist jerk, completely shut –off from the realities that other people live, or even cloistered from it. I think the experience would make him much more well-rounded. But, and I guess I must say this in full disclosure, we're not planning on having kids at all. We think the whole experience [child rearing] seems overrated and want nothing to do with it.

When asked about whether he'd think about sending his hypothetical kids to a charter school or Renaissance school, Johnathan retorted:

Shit no! Are you kidding me? Why would I wanna send my kid to go to a school where they have to follow all those silly rules about keeping shoes tied, hands in their pockets...take all those silly tests that prove nothing? I'm all about social justice, and I'm liberal progressive...I'm all about freedom, and exploration. I work with computers and my love for them derived from my curiosity and desire to explore...explore my interests. From the little I know about these Renaissance schools, they are antithetical to curiosity and exploration so that would be a deal killer right there.

Though it is common for policymakers to plan initiatives on basis of the traditional family construct, husband, wife, and children. Jonathan's remarks brought attention to the fact that not all millenials are interested in having children at all. And though he reocgnized there were changes in Camden's education system with the prevalent and growing presence of charter schools, contrary to common academic literature suggesting middle class millenials value choice schools as an alternative to the percieved "failing" urban public school, Johnathan's comments presents a counter to that

generalization. That Jonathan was quick to criticize the “no-excuses” model of Renaissance providers as anti-democratic, and the antithesis of the kind of education he would want for any children he would have in the future, Johnathan made clear that not all choice is considered a positive, or even attractive.

While current residents who attended Camden public schools overwhelmingly expressed positive memories and viewpoints of Camden’s schools, it was clear that current residents who did not have experience in Camden schools, possessed more negative views largely shaped by hearsay and media reporting. Prospective residents in this study who are all without children, like some current resident who did have experiences in Camden schools, voiced a general sense of optimism in Camden public schools rooted in their desire to see their child attending a Camden public school. Further, prospective residents in this study seemed open to sending their child to a public school in Camden stemming from a sense of community solidarity, and their distaste for “no-excuses” charter schools.

Camden Parents Exercising their Choice Options

There were current residents in this study who did and did not attend Camden schools, who, nonetheless, send their children to charter and parochial schools in the city. While the narrative concerning the necessity of charter schools typically centers on urban minority parent’s desire for greater choice, better student outcomes, improved school curriculum, and greater enthusiasm among staff, study participants who have children attending charter schools did not report the commonly academic-related justifications for charter schools as their motivation behind sending their children to charter and parochial schools.

Gee, who sends his step daughter to a Camden charter school and his step-son to a Camden public school confessed:

Man look around...a lot of these kids in these schools ain't gonna make it. They not, and you know it. Some of these kids at the High [Camden High School], I can just look and tell they not gonna make. First of all, this is America, we not all meant to make it from the rip [from the beginning]...but look at these kids here...some of them smoking [marijuana] already, some of them are having babies already, staying out all night, running the streets, selling [drugs] and all that...and I know cause I lived it too...I went to school here, I know what's going on. And as much as they say it's the teacher's fault and teachers don't care and all that...that ain't true. It's the kids and they parents. These kids these days is wild as hell and don't care... But here they come to school, curse at teachers and do all this street stuff...why I'm a send my daughter to a school with all this? At charter, let a kid act up, let a kid be on some dumb shit...they kickin his ass right up outta there. The charter schools don't be playing with all that...you act up, you gone.

Gee's comments concerning his motivations for sending his daughter to a charter school is based, primarily, in trying to have his daughter avoid certain negative behaviors he believes children in public schools would expose her to. In communicating the concept that "we not all meant to make it" and commenting "it's the kids and the parents", Gee identified the residents and children of Camden as, perhaps, toxic, or what he considers the problem. Adding that it finds it beneficial that charter schools will remove students from the school communicates that the school's pattern of behavior of removing students

they deem problematic is well-known to the community, and to some Camden parents, an attribute.

Mar, also with a daughter in a Camden charter school echoed the sentiments:

In the public schools, you know, you got kids who don't care about education...their parents don't care about the kids education, don't show up to conferences, don't look at they homework, they report cards, nothing. And then you got the kids who don't care either. Why would the kids care if the parents don't care...and those kids go to the public schools...and I know there's lots of good teachers in Camden schools because I had some...loved my years here in Camden. I know a lot of people cared about me here, and a lot of the kids. They did a lot for us, but today...kids is different man. In the charter, especially with my daughter being only eight, she's not ready for all the street shit a lot of these other kids are into...so I send her there.

Mar was particularly glowing in his recollections of his teachers and the memories he has in Camden's public schools, but like Gee believes there is a corrupting element in Camden's public schools that starts with "the parents" and their children. In sending his daughter to a charter school, Mar believes he is protecting his daughter's future that would negatively impacting by other Camden students attending public schools.

When asked if test scores influenced their decision in terms of whether charter schools were better scores Gee remarked:

No, those tests don't got nothing to do with it...I know those tests are bullshit. I don't even know the scores and it doesn't matter. I just send my daughter to the

charter [school] because the kids out there is different...which makes the school itself different.”

Mar added, “To be honest, I really don’t know about the scores and all that. That didn’t impact my decision at all really.”

Gee and Mar’s answers regarding their attitudes concerning Camden school performance on standardized assessments, which are published annually, suggests that though scores and their resulting rankings are published by the NJDOE and CCSD to help parents identify, presumably, better schools, to some parents, such metrics are wholly unimportant.

Ms. Nancey explained her son’s attendance at a Renaissance school after attending a public school:

I was really frustrated with the Administration in the school and Downtown. I had horrible experiences trying to get my son the accommodations [for special needs] he was entitled to based off his IEPs. I tried three different public schools before he attended Mastery...I would go up to the school, speak to principals, go Downtown and speak to people there, all never got nothing done. The special needs department is a big joke. They have IEP meeting without parents, and they never follow what the IEP says the kids need...classes with no in-class support teachers, no more self-contained classes or like only a little bit...not changing assignments for special needs kids in regular classes...it was a mess, and when I went to complain, no one ever did anything...so when his school East Camden Middle got taken over [by Mastery], I was kinda happy because I think maybe they may handle things different with my son’s special needs...maybe.

Ms. Nancy mentioned the primary motivation in sending her child to a new Renaissance school was based on her frustration with her relations with school and CCSD administration in seeking services for her special needs son. She felt unsatisfied that her concerns were not taken seriously, and as a result was open and optimistic to the change in educational setting.

Salaam, who sends his son to a local parochial school, and his daughter to a Camden public school stated:

My son went to public school in North Camden, Cooper's Poynt [Family School] from kindergarten to eighth grade and now I'm sending him to a Catholic school nearby now that he's in high school. My daughter goes to a public high school here and has been in public school all her life. For one, both my kids are on the honor roll because I don't accept anything lower than a 'B' from them...and when they get 'Bs' I'm looking at them like [twisted face]...but honestly, academics has nothing to do with why my son isn't at a public school... My decision to send him there was simply based off football really. I didn't think my son was gonna get treated right by the coach they have at the High, and you know, even if you don't go to the High you can still play for them, and whether you go to another public or charter school in Camden you still play for the High and that guy will still be your coach. So me sending him to a charter or another Camden public school wasn't gonna solve that football issue...so I had to go a whole other route and send him to a Catholic school so my son could play. He had to get used to being one of the only black kids there, but his grades are great and he's ballin, so he's happy.

In prefacing his remarks by stating that his daughter currently attends Camden public school, and his son did until 9th grade, Salaam was clear in his belief of the abilities of Camden public schools to educate his children. What cemented his belief was the academic success his daughter is having at a local magnet school, and the academic success his son is having at a local parochial school attended and facilitated overwhelmingly by suburban whites of higher SES. Commenting that he sends his son out of the school district was primarily an athletics-related decision, Salaam's response represents the nuance in Camden's parents exercising school choice.

After asking Salaam did anything regarding academics or test scores motivate the decision to move his son out of Camden public schools, Salaam mentioned:

Man, my son stays on the honor roll. And he's on the honor roll now...so for all that shit people talk about Camden schools, saying the kids don't learn nothing, or the teachers ain't teaching, my son proves that bullshit...out there on the honor roll in that Catholic school full of white kids and teachers. He out there killin' them. And as far as testing, we know what the tests are all about. They wanna close these schools so they give all these test to simply do what they wanted to do anyway. I don't pay those test results, those school rankings no mind. As long as my son and daughter are handling their business, they're gonna do fine...and really, the way I look at it, it's really my job to educate my kids. So the rankings of the school, the tests results of the school, have nothing to do with my children and their abilities.

Salaam's comments regarding school performance on standardized tests and rankings as unimportant reflects a common thread among participants in that largely,

most are unaware or unmoved in associating school quality and such metrics. Salaam reported being singularly concerned about the grades his children earn, and added his idea that standardized tests and the rankings of schools are orchestrated mechanisms to close public schools and facilitate an increased charter presence.

Ms. Chavis, a public high school clerk in her fifties, during an East Camden focus group mentioned that her son was raised in East Camden, and attended public schools until his tenth grade year before enrolling at a nearby technical high school, explained:

My son was doing fine in public schools here all his life...and never had a problem, but once he became a high school student, he would be attending the same school where I work, which he didn't like the idea of going to school where his mom is at, you know...a growing boy wants to be independent and all that, but to his credit, he tried it. But what was happening was everytime my son did anything, and I mean anything teachers would come to me and telling on him for every little thing just because they knew I was here and that I was him mom. So I said, 'enough of this, I'm taking you out of here', and I did. That was the only reason. It had nothing to do with the other kids, or the education here...I just simply didn't want to have to deal with teachers here coming up to me all the time about him.

The concerns communicated by Ms. Chavis represents a dilemma for some school employees still living in Camden, wishing to send their children to city schools. In initially intending having her son attend and graduate from the school where she works, the nearest high school, the challenges that prompted her decision to remove her son

from city schools were not academically-based, but had more to do with her son's need for independence and Ms. Chavis' desire to have a hassle-free workplace.

Tina explained why her grandson attends a Renaissance school:

When my daughter moved back here, and her son was old enough to attend school, all she kept saying was that her son was not going to a Camden public school. And she meant it. He went to D.U.E. Season, and then when that closed, now goes to Mastery. She was just saying she thinks the parents here in Camden are really young, and don't care enough about their kid's education. The moms don't get out of bed before noon, and they wanna go the stores with there hair all outta place, in they slippers and all that...want to keep their kids in all these afterschool programs so they don't have to deal with them all day...she says those are the kind of mom's who sends their kids to public schools, and mom's like that, have kids that are wild and disrespectful and will mess up school for my grandson. I don't know about all that specifically, but I do see a lot of young girls with kids themselves so how involved are they?

Tina's comments concerning her grandson's attendance at a Renaissance school, communicated that her daughter's judgements of local mothers and prejudices about their children represented sufficient indicators as to the type of children attend Camden's public school. Neither Tina nor her daughter, grew up in Camden or attended Camden's public schools, but their impressions of Camden schools and the people who attend them were calcified by hearsay, media reports, and prejudice.

Wilson, who's mother taught school in Camden, explained to me that despite living in Camden all his life, his mother and father sent him to parochial schools all his life:

I think my parents thought they were giving me the best education by sending me to school outside of Camden. They thought I wouldn't have to deal with all the distractions of Camden schools...the bullies, the fast girls I guess...and I guess I gotta good education out if, but I was thinking, I was in school for six hours a day, but I still come home to Camden everyday, so I'm not sure I didn't have to eventually deal with all that stuff anyway when I come home, but hey.

Despite growing up in Camden, and having a mother work in a Camden school, Nelson attended parochial schools all his life. He mentioned that his mother and father actively tried to avoid the distractions they believed were rampant in public schools. Though acknowledging his parents meant well, Nelson expressed doubts over the efficacy of such a plan in that he was still living in Camden and came home to the same elements his parents sought to avoid in sending him to Catholic schools.

Mark, a prospective Camden resident, does community service work in public schools in North Camden as well as Renaissance schools mentioned:

Really, I haven't heard a kid or parent in the school actually say, 'I chose to be here at Mastery or anything like that', most would say they're school building was taken over, but their kid did not have to go to a different location to attend school, so most were more or less simply accepting of the change. The actual choosing as they say was not really part of it...and that kinda makes me think the taking over the existing was an essential part of ensuring these charters schools'

enrollment...on top of the fact that they're [CCSD] closing any public schools close [geographically] to the Renaissance schools. The CCSD and the Superintendent are going to make sure the Renaissance schools survive...whether the public really wants them or not....cause look at it this way, if the charters take over your kids' buildings, and close nearby public schools, for one, there no longer exists 'school choice' which is ironic considering that's what charter proponents are always harping on...and two, what the CCSD and the Renaissance schools have effectively done, is actually forced parents into sending their kids into their schools...my sense, from the kids and parents I talk to is the only reason they send their kids, or continue to send their kids to schools ran by Renaissance people, is that their buildings were physically taken over, and that if the Renaissance schools started their own schools at another location, they would have never survived.

Mark's comment that he "never really heard a parent say I have chose to be at Mastery" reflects the often misleading narrative concerning Renaissance schools and school "choice" or "options" within the Camden context. Certainly parents have the ability to, and sometimes do, choose to send their children to charter schools in Camden, but as Mark comments indicated, many students attending Renaissance schools have had their building taken over by Renaissance school providers, thereby forcing parents to choose from sending their child to the closest school they had been attending, or transport them to a further public school in another area of the city.

Luis, a father of a son in the fourth grade who attends a Renaissance school in North Camden, works for the city department of public works. He is in his mid thirties

and explained during an East Camden focus groups why his son attends a Renaissance school:

Really, I don't really understand the difference between a public and charter school. I mean they are both free, and the school building is the same building, so to me when the school became a Mastery, it was like the same school, just with some different people and a different name. It wasn't like I went out and chose Mastery, I didn't do that. I didn't have any complaints about his old school [Molina Elementary School] or anything. Like I said, to me its still Molina because he didn't have to actually change school buildings."

Luis' comments illustrate the validity of Mark's comments that parents with children in Renaissance schools were largely forced to decide to send their child to the same building which was now taken over by a Renaissance school, or drive to a different school further away. Luis expressed that he did not have complaints about his son's old school, but since the school was still free, and the school building was still intact, in his view the only thing that changed was the name. Luis, in his mind, did not choose Mastery Charter to send his child to go to school was clear.

Gill, a resident of Whitman Park in his fifties, expressed his rationale for sending his neice and nephew to a Renaissance school in Whitman Park, even though the Renaissance school is sharing a building with a public school:

Before coming here, UnCommon [Schools] and the city and all them were saying this neighborhood would get a brand new school and new development and stores along Mt. Ephraim [Avenue] and all that kinda stuff...you know finally make this neighborhood look better. This section of town hasn't had anything new built here

in forty years! Forty years, man! They showed me the pictures of the school they're gonna build and it looks beautiful man. You gotta see it. The current public school where UnCommon and Bonall [Family School] is at is like a prison. Gates around the whole school, bars on the windows...what kinda school looks like a prison and expects kids to wanna be there...So for us to get a new school and to make this neighborhood look nice, they [UnCommon] need kids in the school... They have on the top floor of Bonsall [Middle School] and need to grow, so I enrolled my neice and nephew in UnCommon so eventually we'll get this brand new building in the neighborhood. The developer said at a meeting last year, this area will get a brand new school, along with all this new development...maybe finally this neighborhood will look like something.

Gill expressed his rationale for sending his neice and nephew to a Renaissance school had more to do with the potential development he heard would come to his neighborhood as a result of UnCommon School's success there. Gill expressed his frustrations that his neighborhood had not seen any new development in four decades and that according to conversations he's heard with developers, if UnCommon Schools were able to expand, the neighborhood would receive a brand new school that doesn't "look like a prison" and increased investment. From Gill's perspective, in order to receive the economic and developmental attention Whitman Park has been long denied, sending his neice and nephew to UnCommon Schools to help ensure its expansion is the price that has to be paid.

Desiree, a Hispanic female social worker in her mid-thirties, sends her son to a local non-Renaissance charter school. She, as a child, volunteered that she too attended

charter schools in middle and high school. When asked why she sends her son to the local charter in North Camden she remarked:

Well, one, its close to my house. Two, because I went to charter schools myself, and didn't have a problem with them while I was there...my parents forced me to go because they didn't want me to go to Pyne Poynt [Middle School] or Woodrow Wilson [High School]. They thought there were too many troublemakers there. My parents are really old school...really traditional...I was raised in the Catholic church and they sorta have those values in them. They didn't want to pay for Catholic school, and thought charters were the next best thing because at least they figured only certain types of kids go there. They thought the kids were these real good kids, and their parents were married and still together and all that...but I kinda, and don't take this the wrong way because I don't think my parents are racist or anything, but they wanted me to go to school with more Hispanics and less black kids...they just thought that black kids cause more trouble. I know that's crazy, but a lot of old Hispanic parents, expecially if they're from the islands think that...so that's why I went. But I send my son because the school is close, and the school got my attention because they built a new school that looks nice, has central air, clean floors and stuff...and also, because the schools kinda courted me by like giving us WaWa gift cards for showing up to meetings, and also because they said they would give each kid a tablet if they enrolled... I want my kid to have the same things those other [white] schools have.

Desiree's comments touched on historic issues of race led her parents to enroll her into a local charter schools where they believed would be less black students, issues of

proximity that led her to send her son to a local charter school, and perhaps a quid pro quo arrangement with the charter school her son now attends. In sharing that the school distributed gift cards to interested parents in the area, and ensuring a tablet for every student, Desiree communicated the lengths some Camden charter schools are going to attract parents and enroll their children. And understandably, in an area so economically depressed, some such tactics are, resonating with, and, convincing parents.

Participants' views of Camden schools and school choice appears to be shaped by their own experiences in Camden schools, the information participants came across about Camden schools, and participants' own views of what kind of children attend Camden's public schools. Participants who attended Camden schools expressed positive emotions and memories about their experiences, while the idea of sending their children to Camden's public schools was less uniform. Camden residents who did not attend Camden public schools, but nonetheless, came to form opinions of Camden's public school through hearsay or media reporting appeared to develop more negative views of Camden public schools, its students, and their parents. Prospective residents who also had very little experience attending Camden schools, however, expressed a more open-minded approach to sending their future children to Camden's public schools which seemed to derive from a sense of community, and solidarity with their community; and at the same time expressed the likelihood of sending their children to other schools, not necessarily Renaissance schools, if they deemed necessary.

Of all the participants with children who attend non-Camden schools, none mentioned academic-related rationale as an explanation for their decision. No participant with a child attending a choice school referenced an expanded charter curriculum, better

instruction, or better performance on standardized exams as a motivator for choosing to send their child school outside of the CCSD. The most common reason mentioned by participants with children in choice schools was the prejudice of negative influences of other public school children upon their own child. The presumption that participants' whose children attend school outside of Camden public schools were the "good" kids, and that they needed protection from the other public school kids who "didn't care about their education" and had parents who "did not care about their child's education", was apparent among both Camden residents who attended Camden schools themselves and those who had not. No participant who has children attending a school outside of CCSD viewed school standardized test scores, or school rankings as an important factor they considered when making their decision of what school their child attended. Additionally, no participant communicated improved academics, curriculum, or pedagogical approaches at non-CCSD as a motivators for their child's relocation either. In sum, it appears the rationale behind parent's sending their children to non-public schools in Camden is more nuanced, and at odds with the often communicated discourse surrounding school choice in Camden.

Discussion of Public Schools and School Choice in Camden

Much academic research highlights the failure of public schools in urban America by identifying a litany of performance indicators such as poorly trained and ineffective teachers, inadequate curriculum, poor performance on standardized assessments, low graduation rates and low college enrollment (Holme, 2013; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012, Kahlenberg, 2013). Such urban public school failure has long been identified as a factor in sustaining concentrated generational poverty in urban America by deterring middle

income earners from residing within cities (Gennetian, et. al, 2012; Kahlenberg, 2013). As such, arguments in favor of urban school choice through selective public schooling and charters, have fomented as choice schooling is seen as a mechanism to offer better public education within urban America (Cucchiara, Gold & Simon, 2011; Roda, 2013; Farmer & Poulos, 2015). Proponents of urban charter schools argue that charter schools offer a more rigorous curriculum, demand more accountability from teachers in delivering quality instruction, have better performance indicators when compared to local urban public schools, and are necessary to offer competition to public schools that have had a monopoly on public education (Chubb & Moe; 1990).

Further, urban school choice proponents posit that urban parents choose to send their children to charter schools to escape “failing public schools”, in search of better schooling options (Grooms & Williams, 2013). Additionally, literature suggests the existence of school choice options may not only be a benefit to urban parents with children in non-public schools, but can also provide a more exclusive public education sought after by middle class income parents seeking to reside within city limits (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Within this study, the researcher sought to learn how Camden residents and prospective residents perceived public education and school choice in Camden. There were great variance in the respondents’ point of view of Camden public school, which seemed inextricably linked to participants’ experiences or lack of experience in Camden schools. Among current Camden residents who attended Camden schools, the public schools were generally viewed positively, often with current residents referencing their time in Camden schools, and teachers that left a positive impact on their lives. Largely,

current residents with older children in Camden schools expressed support in Camden public schools' effectiveness in educating their children, and them as well. Among current residents who attended Camden schools with young children, there was much less support for Camden public schools, primarily due to prejudices held concerning other public school children including their behavior and desire to learn.

Further, among study participants who are current Camden residents with no experience in Camden schools but have school age children, support for Camden's public schools was virtually non-existent. Unlike current residents that have experience being educated in Camden public schools who could refer to their own memories of "good" teachers and positive learning experiences, these current residents understandings of Camden public schools largely initiated from third-parties like hearsay or news media which overwhelmingly cast a negative light on Camden public schools.

Prospective residents, surprisingly, seemed to express optimism and possibility at the idea of having their children attend Camden's public schools. They were clear in acknowledging their concerns with respect to race and poverty within Camden's public schools, but at the same time, expressed the desire to be part of the community and see their future children attending public schools as an element of authentically growing part of the Camden community.

Pursuant to school choice in Camden, current residents with children in public schools expressed little emotion with respect to praising or demeaning Camden's charter schools. While some participants were clear in expressing the connection between the opening of charter schools with the closing of public schools, and expressing suspicion

regarding the growing number of charter schools in Camden, most current residents with children in public schools were dismissive of charter schools.

Camden parents who do have children in choice schools, (including charter schools, Renaissance schools, Catholic schools, and technical schools), when asked why they chose to send their child to a non-public school, offered a variety of reasons; surprisingly, none of which included academic-related reasons as a motivation. Respondents with children in a choice setting mentioned reasons such as school proximity to their home, a building's charter takeover enabled children to remain educated in the same building, sports-related reasons, newer facilities, and concern over "other kids" in public schools. Though the common narrative put forward to explain parents' motivation in exercising urban choice options, and thus their necessity, is often rooted in academic arguments, no parent with children in choice setting expressed a desire to pursue a "better" [academic] school as a reason they chose to send their child to a non-public school.

Furthermore, while growing research points to the existence of urban charter schools as a mechanism to attract and retain urban middle class income earners, in this study prospective residents expressed the desire to send their children to Camden's public schools. And if unsatisfied, would use their means to change their child's education setting. With the exception of one prospective resident, no prospective residents were considering sending their child to any charter school or Renaissance school in Camden; but instead, expressed a willingness to send their child to Catholic schools as their contingency plan. When prospective Camden residents were asked why they were not considering the new Renaissance schools as an option for their children, most expressed a

clear repulsion to the test-heavy, and discipline-focused approach employed by the “no-excuses” charter management operators which manage all of Camden’s Renaissance schools. Prospective residents overwhelmingly sought out an educational experience for their children that they considered to be creative, exploratory, and one that “makes learning fun”.

Finally, all participants were asked whether school rankings, and school performance on standardized tests influenced their opinion of a “good school” and where they send their child to school. Principally, study participants, expressed test scores and school rankings had minimal impact on their determinations of what makes a good school, or where they would send their child.

Overall, it can be stated study participants’ views of Camden schools is greatly influenced by how they experienced Camden schools, either directly through attending schools, or indirectly through hearsay and media reports. Study participants with direct experience with Camden schools through attendance, generally held a positive view of Camden schools and exercised a willingness to have their older children attend public schools. Current residents with no experience attending Camden public schools, and reported reading or hearing about Camden public schools are likely to hold negative views of Camden’s public schools. Also, study participants who do exercise school choice options for their children in Camden, do so for a litany of non-academic related reasons like sports, school proximity, and behavioral prejudices over other children who they believe attend public schools. Thus, the motivations behind Camden parents exercising choice options are more numerous and nuanced than is commonly communicated. Additionally, prospective Camden residents who participated in the study

expressed optimism in the future of Camden's public schools, a desire to have their children attend Camden public schools, and would send their child to a parochial school as an alternative education setting if the public school did not meet their satisfaction.

Lastly, prospective Camden residents, with the exception of one, did not see the "no-excuse" Renaissance schools as an acceptable option for their child under any circumstance in that their curriculum seemed too narrowly focused on test preparation and discipline.

CHAPTER 9

IT'S ALL CONNECTED...FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS

With such massive changes in Camden taking place within recent years, study participants were asked to consider whether they viewed the changes in education, and development as coincidental siloed occurrences, or did they see such changes as part of a larger plan. In this study, current Camden residents who, were overwhelmingly Black or Hispanic and low-income, expressed disbelief that the new Renaissance schools are for the benefit of Camden's schoolchildren, but believe they are connected to a larger effort by political actors to gentrify Camden by displacing residents.

Current Camden Residents' Views on Whether Renaissance Schools are Part of a Larger Redevelopment Plan or Specifically About Education

When Tiana was asked if she sees any reason the Renaissance schools were established during a time of such substantial changes in Camden public safety and development, she replied:

I just heard that they were better. ...But I think they wanna take Camden back like it used to be. You know the politicians, you know they...its all about money with them and the Waterfront and rebuilding all down there, I think its about them trying to get the problems out of Camden and bring in other people. I think its basically designed to get people out of Camden and bring in....white folks. Trying to get rid of street people. I guess that's why they coming, this stuff was planned for a minute. Thats the reason they was giving people Section 8 and people were like, 'yeah I'm moving down the highway' (Winslow, Sicklerville, and other bordering suburbs) and they kids are going to those suburban schools and live in

the suburbs... and that's why they was giving it to 'em in the first place - to get them up outta here. I been noticing the past few months seeing white people all around here...I been seeing alot of white people around here jogging...even in this Parkside area, alot of white people. I was like 'what the...', I been seeing them on their bikes and stuff.

Tiana's comments illustrate the concern held by some current residents that demographic changes are underway in Camden through gentrification and displacement. She believes the changing in education in Camden, specifically referring to Renaissance schools, is the result of politicians' pursuit for money and part of a broader plan that includes a concerted effort to attract white people to live in Camden, along with simultaneously ridding the city of many low-income residents by exiling them to the surrounding suburbs.

Longtime resident Rita expressed her own theories concerning the timing of Camden redevelopment and Renaissance schools being established:

I know for a fact this [establishing of Renaissance schools] has nothing to do with education, and everything to do with land. Did you know every Renaissance school company, KIPP-Norcross, UnCommon, and Mastery were all given money from the EDA to develop blocks surrounding their schools? UnCommon was given over \$70 millions to develop...If it's simply about schools, and they were already given the buildings by the school district, what reason would they need all this money for? And why is it coming from the EDA? Oh yeah! Did you also notice that all the Mastery Charters are near bodies of water...where everyone knows is considered prime real estate? This is about development. This is about

getting poor black and Puerto Ricans out of Camden...the ones they don't want, anyway...you know, the single moms on welfare, living on Section 8...you see them tearing down all these projects and public housing. This is on purpose.

In connecting the Renaissance school's construction and location to real estate and the schools' funding sources, Rita communicated her suspicion that improving education for Camden's children was not the true motive behind the imposition of Renaissance schools. Instead, Rita sees the redevelopment of urban land in Camden as the goal, leading to the displacement of Camden residents who are deemed undesirable.

Tina, the participant most vocally critical of Camden's public school system was clear in her belief that the establishing of Renaissance schools are part of a larger effort to attract non-Camden residents:

I think all of this development stuff is not for the benefit of city residents. No not at all. Look at the rising home prices downtown... And the jobs they're bringing in... they keep saying you need a college degree for like Holtec. This city is another Detroit. The Renaissance schools might seem good for people living here now, but in the long run, many won't even be here to send their kids.

Tina, despite sending her grandson to a Renaissance schools, was clear in her disbelief that the Renaissance schools are going to be a long term benefit for Camden's residents. In noting the rapidly rising home prices in some of Camden's neighborhoods, Tina questioned whether many of Camden's current residents will be around long enough to send their children to the Renaissance schools that were supposedly established for their benefit.

Tone, when asked about whether the Renaissance schools, in his view was about better education for Camden's children, or something else, replied:

The Renaissance schools are certainly part of a larger power play by those in power. But whose feet do we hold to the fire? I have been hearing about residents' taxes and rents going up and I am concerned about it. But how can we as residents figure out how to answer ...that is my concern. This is all about gentrification and moving all the black people and gentrification in cities has been happening for decades like in Harlem and sections of Philly, San Francisco, Oakland, New Orleans...Camden is no different. Here it is, right across the river from a major US city in Philly, and here are all these poor low income minorities. They had enough of that... They tryin' to put us outta here. But again, the question is how do we respond to it? And the question is not *if* it is happening, because it certainly is. It's not a question of are they gonna get it off, they are getting it off. So the question is how are we gonna respond to it? If residents fail to fight for their community, Camden will be gentrified and that's gonna be bad because white folks gonna come in and take over like they trying to do Downtown. These changes are intended to benefit the middle class...and middle class white folks specifically.

Tone, who clearly expressed his active role in bringing UnCommon Schools to the Whitman Park neighborhood, here, plainly remarked the establishing of Renaissance schools is only part of a larger plan that seeks to gentrify the city. In identifying that middle class white people are the demographic being targeted to reside in Camden, Tone warns that gentrification is happening, and wants to see the residents fight to retain their community by holding someone's "feet to the fire".

Gee, when asked what he thinks about the Renaissance schools and recent development expressed his thoughts:

Actually, I never really thought about all this until today...But now that I'm being asked about it, I can see now how all the changes kinda fit in place. They trying to make Camden seem safer...make it seem like the schools are good now, and that all the jobs are here now. But it's...it's not real...or should I say it's not to the people here. They trying to get us up out here...especially if you don't gotta job or something...you gotta go. I keep telling you, everybody ain't meant to make it. We not all meant to survive. That's the way life is...see, I know you...you like beliving in all that hope and wish shit, but I'm a realist. In a few years, Camden's not gotta look nothing like how it does now...people-wise I'm sayin'. Watch how many more white people is here. Hell, its changing now...hoods I grew up and played in, literally, are gone.

In reflecting on his past growing up in Camden, Gee mentioned the apparent changes he sees physically in his old communities. Though he confessed to not initially seeing or thinking about any connections between the establishment of Renaissance schools, the revapming of Camden public safety, the arriving corporations and recent Camden development, Gee arrived at the conclusion that they are all connected with the goal of getting resident "up outta here" and increasing the number of white residents.

Ms. Yancey remarked to questions regarding her thoughts on Renaissance schools and recent changes in Camden remarked:

You know, for years, ever since I was a little girl, my daddy used to tell me, 'Watch and see, white people are gonna come and take Camden back', and I

didn't believe him at the time, but I guess he was right. They couldn't do it with sort of Camden's [public] schools being how they are...I mean seriously everyone knows no white couple would move into Camden, pay taxes here and all that and send their kids to Hatch or Morgan [Village Creative Arts Academy], but since the state tookover the District, I noticed the school district is getting way more positive press and making it seem like the schools are turning around...And know, you add the new charter schools [Renaissance schools], especially with that beautiful KIPP school right there by the hospital, and they gotta pool, gonna be giving kids violin lessons, oh, and that new medical school too...then those doctors from somewhere else, can move to Camden. And while they attend their medical school they can send their kids right next door, or across the street if they are hospital employees, all without sending their kids to public schools at all...it really works out for them. For us, I really can't see us being here like this, too much longer.

Ms. Yancey, in specifically referencing the KCNA and the development in Downtown Camden, sees the imposition of Renaissance schools and recent development in Camden as the realization of a prediction her father made to her years ago – that “white people are gonna come and take Camden back.” She outlined a scenario where she sees medical school students or Cooper Hospital staff living Downtown, and sending their children to nearby, exclusive KCNA where swimming and violin lessons are offered to the white newcomers. Further, Ms. Yancey reported feeling like Camden residents would not be residing in the city much longer.

Rashawn, like many other residents, connected the formation of Renaissance school to Camden redevelopment and Camden demographics:

My thoughts are the Norcrosses and local politicians are trying to force Camden back to how it was in the 1950's...a return to manufacturing and industry which you have with all the corporations coming to Camden. But along with that, they also want a return of middle class people, specifically and probably should I say, preferably young, white, college educated people living here permanently as well. You are going to see Camden become a lot more of an expensive place to live, and some people who are here now, are simply not going to be able to afford it, and will have to move out. And certainly, Renaissance schools are part of the plan.

Shaheed contributed his beliefs regarding the expanding presence of Renaissance schools and redevelopment in Camden, specifically how the elderly will be impacted:

Your gonna see, wherever they put these schools, the neighborhoods are gonna change drastically, and for some people that change will look good. New school buildings look nice in every neighborhood. Do I think its to benefit the kids here? Hell no. But do I think for some people, like old folks, that the presence of a new [school] building will make their neighborhoods look nice, yeah. But for how long? Watch you see with these new schools, higher rents and home prices, and taxes...and what are them old people who thought that school was so nice gonna think when they can't afford their spot no more? I hate these politicians so much for pulling this shit on us...and they got it off too. For me, I'm a be okay cause I have a career and can afford to move someplace else if I have to, but you can't

say that for many many people here. In a few years a lot of people here now are gonna be assed-out.

Rashawn and Shaheed's comments referenced the future of Camden will comprise more middle class white residents, and the idea that the establishing of Renaissance schools is only part of the plan to facilitate demographic change. Both predicting affordability difficulties for most Camden residents, Rashawn and Shaheed believe displacement of Camden's population is a likely outcome.

Although most residents expressed concern pertaining to residents' futures in Camden resulting from contemporary educational and redevelopment changes, Mr. Fussell seemed unfazed:

Young man, I'm old. I been around for over eighty years, forty of which, were here. I dealt with all kinds of stuff in my life...racism, gangs, pimps, pushers, hustlers, all that...what you are asking me about here today, these new schools like the one across the street, and these development projects...they may seem like a huge deal to you now because you relatively young...but to me, its just another...thing...Another thing to live with, and get through. My babershop has been here for a long, long time...and I had a lot of special moments here. If you look around, and see all this Black History here...in the center of Camden...if I can't stay here, it will bother me a little bit, but I have a lot of memories and had amazing times here, man. You need to understand, I know you know, but you need to understand, nothing in this world lasts forever...and that includes your right to the very land [that is] under you feet...everything is finite. That is in addition to the feeling I have that black people in Camden had our opportunities

to make this city great, but pissed it away and have nothing to show for it...so its being taken away from us now.

In referencing his own personal experiences dealing with change, and perhaps frustration that black people in Camden did have political power in the past and squandered the opportunity, Mr. Fussell concluded these current changes he's witnessing in Camden, is simply a recent part of his long history dealing with change. Commenting that "nothing in this world lasts forever...that includes your right to the very land under your feet" communicates his concept that gentrification and displacement are not likely, but eminent.

Ms. Nancy, one of three current residents mentioned not giving any thought to the idea of where the Renaissance schools fit in a larger Camden redevelopment context commented:

I'm gonna be honest...I really haven't thought about it. I'm just trying to raise these two boys, get them graduated outta high school, and hopefully in college or the military. I'm not too concerned about rent or anything because like I said earlier I own my house now...I guess I'm just trying to take the Mayor at her word and stay positive I guess.

In focusing on raising her sons, Ms. Nancy communicated being too preoccupied with the immediate issues facing her today, to fret about whatever eventualities may lie ahead. In trying to stay positive and not think about the future in Camden resulting from the establishing of Renaissance schools and recent development, Ms. Nancy made the deliberate choice to not think about it.

Similarly, current residents Mar and Desiree expressed having given little thought to any connections between the Renaissance schools and recent Camden redevelopment and, at the time, had little to add with respect to that question.

Prospective Residents' Views on Whether Renaissance Schools are Part of a Larger Redevelopment Plan, or Solely to Improve Education in Camden

Prospective Camden residents in this study, the young childless, college-educated professionals that urban areas like Camden have been courting for decades, unanimously identified the connection between the establishing of Renaissance schools and contemporary Camden redevelopment as an effort by the City to attract protential residents like themselves; not to better education or life for current residents. Lieve mentioned:

It's really kinda ridiculous...this idea that bringing in jobs from a few miles away, changing the name of the police force and de-unionizing it, and starting all these "no-excuse" charters would attract white millenials like myself...I can't find a more fitting word than...ridiculous. I mean, my first thought is 'who did they talk to that gave them these ideas'? They have no idea what matters to us. For one, we do care about getting a good education for our kids, but I think they underestimated our desire for rights and democracy...of which there is none of both in Camden...especially if you're minority and don't live in the Victor [Building] or Cooper Grant. Secondly, what makes them think any educated person, or should I say anyone who cares about education, would send their kids to any school where uniformity and testing and strict discipline is the school's calling card? So I guess, while its obvious the City cares about attracting the

middle class to Camden, I guess it would have been better for them to know what millenials want. We don't wanna live near poverty, but no one does...but especially when poverty is a matter of systemic, and sustained racial oppression. We want neighborhoods where we can walk...green spaces...and we also want rights, and democracy...and to be neighbors to our neighbors. I think we are caricatured, or prejudged based on the whole white-flight thing... I'd like to think a lot of white young people have no problem living next to black people...especially if they've been college educated because chances are they are much more open-minded than we are given credit for. True, I came to Camden because of my job, but I chose to live in Camden because I wanted to learn here...and grow here. My fiancé is here and is still getting used to it, but is liking it more and more. We could have lived in Cherry Hill or Collingswood, but we chose here.

Much is made in academic research and media of the negative impact city residents experience when more affluent neighbors move into economically depressed areas. While rises in home and rental prices, resident displacement, and erosion of neighborhood culture are often cited as drawbacks to gentrification, Liev's comments communicated that he, and other millenials like him have been prejudged by Camden policymakers incorrectly. Liev's remarks expressed that it is important to him and other potential gentrifiers, in his view, to become authentically part of their community. He also expressed a strong desire to see democracy return to Camden and its residents, and continued to criticize, what he categorized, as the city's oppressive and misguided approach to attract like individuals to Camden.

Mark, another prospective Camden resident commented:

I know the local politicians are trying to attract a whiter...middle class demographic to Camden. But the kind of surface level change is not going to do much at all. The Renaissance schools aren't going to attract anyone...and no one I know cares very much at all for charter schools or the public schools one way or the other. I see the Renaissance project as simply an effort to window-dress the problems of education in Camden for an outside audience. The funny thing is, I kinda think millennials...and younger people like me envision education for our children that is substantive...means something....creative...exploratory...and really, service-oriented I guess. These charters, aren't that...but at the same time possibly, the conversation, initially at least, about education in Camden changes a little bit, but certainly not enough to convince us to move here. I think, despite all these efforts to attract us has little impact on the residents that do actually live here, and have been here. We want to be part of the Camden community...and that doesn't mean be part of an artificial, created 'white Camden'...but for us to be part of what is already here, and a real genuine opportunity for everyone to live, work, and grow...I could honestly see myself, with my family here well into my forties, but I know it would be disgusting for residents who have been here to be pushed out, or unwelcome due to the city going through such lengths to attract us here.

Mark views the imposition of Renaissance schools, and recent Camden redevelopment efforts are aimed with the purpose of specifically attracting a new, "artificial" white middle-class to Camden. Focusing overwhelmingly on education and

charter schools, Mark communicated that Renaissance schools aren't the kind of school choice the white millenials Camden seeks to attract, would even find amenable demonstrating that any school choice, is not necessarily considered a benefit. Continuing, Mark communicated a missed oupportuinty for policymakers to engage with the Camden community and improve the lives of residents in the city in pursuit of a white middle-class.

Rebecca in a focus group mentioned:

I think its clear the changes in education, police, and coporations being lured here through tax breaks is aimed at engineering demographic change. My belief is that all of this is happening now because Camden was gonna be Christie's pet project to claim success in an urban area during his presidential run. And in fact, actually he mentioned the 'successes' in Camden he has achieved through 'working with Democrats in a Blue State' and 'compromising' and all that garbage he spews...but certainly none of this stuff is for the people who are are here. Not at all. They sorta roll out the red carpet if you are a student, white, have money, or all of the above. The only place where it is safe is down by the Waterfront, Cooper Grant, and maybe Downtown...why? Because that's where the white people are... The reality is, no people who I talk to, none of my associates are reconsidering moving to Camden because of all these changes. What I do see is the poor minorities here being further ailienated, ignored, and Norcross benefitting in, what will be, another failed attempt to attract white people. If they put half as much energy in investing in residents, their neighborhoods, ironically, not just white people specifically, Camden would be attracting people easily. But

they haven't and race and politics have everything to do with it, and that, is simply shameful and infuriating to me...so I can only imagine how residents feel.

Similarly, Jonathan called for investing in Camden's current residents:

I certainly see what they are trying to do, and in a way I think it kinda fits the classic, traditional model of urban development...strengthen schools, provide jobs, provide recreation, and take care of public safety. But these residents here have been here for generations and there is never been such an effort to improve the lives of people here. Like I said earlier, and keep thinking about myself...as young of a city as Camden is, the city should have been putting energy and resources in developing the young people here...but instead they are moving heaven and earth, and literally sparing no expense to attract people like me, a white guy from Collingswood...who doesn't even live here. It still sounds kind of crazy just hearing it out loud doesn't it?

I sharing their beliefs that Renaissance schools and recent Camden development are simply urban projects aimed at bolstering Governor Christie's presidential run, and consolidating money and power for George Norcross, Rebecca empathized with the frustration she believes residents feel. Johnathan's beliefs communicated their shared view that the energy and resources dedicated by policymakers to attract white people will ultimately end in failure and should have been used to improve the lives of those already in the city.

Josie, a prospective resident who grew up in Camden, was the most optimistic about the changes and promises she's heard, but was still cautious:

I think there needed to be some changes with education in Camden certainly...though I'm not quite sure what they are...the idea of parents having more options to send their kids to is a benefit to everyone, but I can certainly see where millennials who are considering living in Camden with their families would see the benefit in that...which at the same time gives me pause... I don't think Camden development or education changes are benefitting the residents, or ever were really intended to. Many people are still struggling. And what makes it kinda weird for me is because I'm from here and I see people where I grew up sort of...shut out or removed from everything...but at the same time, because of what I do, who I know, and my income, I can benefit personally...but as for the Renaissance schools, I think the success of these charter schools will be a long-term thing to see whether parents would move or live in Camden to send their kid to these schools... And it will take a long time to see the change in demographics they are looking for.

Josie's comments identified a reality that Renaissance schools add to the idea of school choice some parents may find beneficial. Acknowledging her suspicion that none of the changes occurring in Camden were intended to truly benefit current residents, Josie recognizes that for people in her professional and economic position, she is better situated to take advantage of whatever changes Camden undertakes, regardless of their successes or shortcomings – something she recognizes many current residents cannot say.

Of all the findings that emerged during the study, the sentiment that imposed Renaissance schools, along with current Camden redevelopment is a coordinated effort aimed at attracting non-Camden residents exhibited the most agreement across

participants. Both current residents and prospective residents, and participants of all races, with the exception of three participants who expressed they hadn't given the subject any thought and thus did not feel comfortable responding, held the view that the imposition of Renaissance schools were simply a portion of a coordinated plan aimed at changing longstanding negative perceptions concerning education, crime, and unemployment in Camden; in addition to achieving planned demographic change through displacement and gentrification. Finally, the idea that education and redevelopment changes were initiated to benefit current Camden residents, was not held by a single study participant.

Discussion of It's All Connected

Study participants were asked a series of questions inquiring whether they believed that the establishing of Renaissance schools in Camden, and other simultaneous Camden redevelopment projects (relating to public safety, relocating of corporations to Camden, and development projects), are related in some way, or simply separate occurrences taking place, coincidentally, within a similar timeframe. While three of the thirty respondents confessed to never having given the idea regarding the timing or motivation of these occurrences any thought, the other twenty-seven participants explicitly communicated their thoughts that they did not believe the imposition of Renaissance schools to be simply "about improving education in Camden", but along with other Camden redevelopment projects, is connected to a larger plan at work in Camden. Some current residents expressed their suspicions that the Renaissance schools are part of a larger plan to acquire Camden land for development, dismantle Camden's

public's school system, and ultimately displace residents to attract white people from the surrounding suburbs.

Prospective residents who participated in this study also viewed Renaissance schools and other concurrent redevelopment projects as part of a larger plan to remake Camden's image in attempts to lure other middle class millennials, much like themselves to live in Camden. Most prospective residents questioned whether the recruitment of "no-excuse" CMOs to operate Renaissance schools would do anything to lure middle class parents to Camden, and if any would be willing to send their children to such Renaissance schools seemingly focused on test scores and discipline. Prospective residents, generally, did not communicate seeing an effort to actively displace residents. But did see an explicit attempt to by Camden officials to gentrify the city by targeting local college students and employees in existing and arriving Camden businesses. All respondents mentioned the targeted development of the Waterfront, Lanning Square, and Downtown neighborhoods as proof Camden is seeking to attract prospective residents to Camden who are more educated, more affluent, and whiter; and not for the benefit of Camden's current low-income minority residents.

CHAPTER 10

OVERVIEW OF STUDY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore current and prospective residents' perceptions of Camden's new state-mandated Renaissance schools along with Camden redevelopment. As more academic research continues to make connections between urban redevelopment, gentrification, school choice, and charter schools (Makris, 2013; Simon, 2011; Roda, 2013), much less research has been dedicated to eliciting the viewpoints of the marginalized residents impacted by urban education and redevelopment policy decisions. And while many assumptions are often made regarding what prospective city residents are looking for in deciding whether to reside permanently in urban areas, this study's purpose was to elicit and convey the views of both current marginalized Camden residents, who such changes are often said to be *for*, and prospective residents, who such changes many suspect are being initiated to attract.

As mentioned previously, this study employed standpoint theory as a conceptual framework to further understand how current Camden residents, overwhelmingly comprised of low income minorities who are often marginalized from decision-making processes (McClish & Bacon, 2002), as well more affluent prospective Camden residents, perceive both imposed Renaissance schools and current redevelopment projects in Camden that are occurring simultaneously. Through standpoint theory, the researcher was able to highlight current and prospective residents' beliefs and conceptions regarding Camden educational and development changes; which, too often, are muted or negated by local policy-makers with decision making power. Further, by employing standpoint

theory in this qualitative study, it allowed residents who often are ignored, and rarely asked to share their views pertaining to the future of their city, to contribute their thoughts and views, which, potentially, differ from the views and recommendations held by those with power (Allen, 1998).

Qualitative inquiry guided the research design, data collection, and data analysis. By employing a recruiting strategy of connecting with community members and prospective Camden residents through local civic organizations (Sampson, 2002; 2003) and issuing preliminary questionnaires to interested participants, the researcher was subsequently able to identify and select thirty study participants. This study employed the data collection through focus groups and individual interviews. The criteria for participation in this study was that participants had to be over the age of eighteen and either a permanent Camden resident, or seriously considering moving to Camden permanently within five years. Of the thirty study participants, nine were considered prospective Camden residents, and twenty-one were considered current Camden residents. All participants self-identified as either Black, White, or Hispanic. The participant ages ranged from 18-83.

Limitations of this study and implications for further research will also be discussed in this chapter.

Implications

For decades Camden, NJ has been plagued by urban divestment, middle class flight, joblessness, crime, and a deteriorating public education. While those with the means to avoid living Camden have, for decades have done so; and those with the means to move out of Camden, have done so as well, Camden, largely has been home to

minorities battling against generational poverty and a lack of opportunities needed to thrive. Additionally, Camden residents, like residents in urban centers across the country, have seen the influence of the connected and the policy-makers grow at the same time their own voices are being marginalized and silenced.

Without the substantive inclusion of Camden residents' voices, policymakers with influence over Camden imposed Renaissance schools that legitimately threatens the sustained existence of Camden's public school system, and along with concurrent Camden redevelopment projects, of which Camden's residents were also marginalized from, contributes to an atmosphere in which Camden seems to be no longer interested in benefitting those who live there, in efforts to court those who do not.

Through highlighting the views and perceptions of current Camden residents and prospective residents, several implications emerged from this study that can be beneficial for community members, developers, and policymakers alike in developing a greater understanding of how both marginalized Camden residents perceive the imposition of Renaissance schools and redevelopment projects in Camden that seem to be happening *to* them, rather than *for* them. Additionally, further implications can inform key stakeholders whether the establishing of Renaissance schools, and other changes in Camden is a sufficient lure to attract middle class prospective Camden residents to become permanent residents.

First, both current and prospective residents expressed suspicion concerning, possibly, hidden motivations behind the imposition of Renaissance schools in Camden during a time when there appears to be such drastic change throughout the city impacting public safety, land development, and economics. Current residents expressed suspicion

over why Renaissance schools are being set up now. Prospective Camden residents, however, expressed skepticism pertaining to the efficacy of policymakers' approach of establishing "no-excuses" Renaissance schools to serve as a sufficient educational option in attempt to lure prospective residents' to reside in Camden permanently. Study participants clearly communicated doubt regarding the establishing of Renaissance schools, which appeared to stem from current residents being marginalized from the education decision-making processes, and miscalculations with respect to the type of education options prospective residents find amenable.

Secondly, while both current and prospective residents acknowledged massive changes underway in Camden, not all changes were viewed as necessary, or even the changes that mattered to them. Participants across the study acknowledged the need for a safe, economically viable, and educated Camden. Yet, in that current Camden residents are not authentically engaged in decision-making processes in Camden, much of the changes that are said to be *for* Camden, are greeted with suspicion initially by residents, and often determined, to be for the benefit of others. Current residents often supported their views by highlighting the duration of time Camden residents were forced to endure poverty and lack of opportunity. As a result, the perspectives of current Camden residents were generally, "Why is all this happening now [all of a sudden]?" frequently turned into "It's [recent Camden changes] not for us".

Additionally, study participants overwhelmingly communicated the lack of democracy in Camden adding that power rests in the hands of a few people, or with one man, George Norcross. This finding, perhaps more than the others facilitated the view across the study that the imposition of Renaissance schools and other contemporary

Camden redevelopment projects are not necessarily for the people living in Camden. Both current and prospective Camden residents acknowledged the substantial influence of the policymakers connected to power have, and the authority Norcross wields. Participants overwhelmingly viewed such a concentration of decision-making power as a negative, and desired to see authentic democracy in Camden restored. Further, in that many contemporary Camden projects either bear the Norcross name, are affiliated with Cooper Hospital, or appear to benefit individuals with personal ties to Norcross, cause participants to doubt whether any of Camden's current changes, including Renaissance schools is anything other than a profit or power grabbing endeavor executed by Norcross. This too, derives from a lack of inclusion in decision-making, and thus residents and prospective residents begin to form their own assumptions. Stakeholders seeking to develop trust and support among those intended to benefit from policy decisions in Camden, may find including residents in decisions that impact their communities positively impacts resident reception and success of new policies.

Thirdly, while many assumptions are made in popular media, and by policymakers concerning the perspectives both Camden parents and prospective Camden residents have regarding public education and school choice in Camden, this study demonstrates the complexity and nuance on the matter. While many participant's views on Camden schools is influenced by their experience attending Camden schools, other's perceptions are impacted by what they have come to learn from associates and media. Further, participants' exercising choice in Camden appears to have much less to do with academic related motivations than is often communicated.

Continuing, prospective Camden residents in this study, appeared considerably more open to the idea of having their children attend Camden public schools, and at the same time, do not see the city's charter school and Renaissance school options, as quality options at all. In the final analysis, participants portrayed views of Camden that is vast and varied, and much more layered than what is commonly communicated about Camden's "failing" schools, school choice in Camden, and prospective residents' views of Camden public education for their children.

What was clear however, is the little regard participants held for school rankings and test scores, which are often cited as indicators of school quality. While some pointed to test scores and school rankings as proof of other issues associated within a particular school, no participant equated low test scores and low school rankings with a "failing school." In fact, most participants conceded such metrics had no impact on their view of a particular school, or where they chose to send their child to be educated in any way.

Stakeholders and policymakers, if desiring to understand and convey a more accurate depiction of how Camden's current and prospective residents perceive Camden's public schools and school choice, ought to seek out their opinions explicitly. In doing so, the delivery of more effective and precise initiatives can likely maximize what constituents are looking for in providing quality education in Camden, without the potential waste that can result from acting on assumptions as to what constituents want.

Finally, participants across the study communicated the idea that, in their view, Renaissance schools are part of a larger plan and coordinated effort to attract non-Camden residents to live in the city. By presenting Camden as "safer", filled with new economic opportunity, historic Downtown and Waterfront development, and an entire

school choice system, the narrative of “Camden is Rising” (Redd, 2015) abounds.

Whether through displacement, gentrification, or both, study participants were in explicit in their beliefs that a plan exists among policymakers to alter Camden’s demographics. Yet, despite the argument that a new delivery of public education in Camden would be a catalyst to attract middle class millennials to reside in Camden with their families, study participants largely viewed the idea as unlikely (Roda & Wells, 2013; Simon, Gold, & Christman, 2008). Often communicating the “no-excuse” model of education employed by Renaissance school providers as antithetical to their conception of what a quality education resembled (Cucchiara, Gold, & Simon, 2011), prospective Camden residents in this study were against the idea of sending their future children to any Renaissance school, and much less apt to move to Camden because of them.

Finally, study participants overwhelmingly voiced the need for policymakers to invest resources in the Camden that exists now; the people, neighborhoods, and public school system, rather than investing so many resources in attracting people who have yet to show any real interest in living there at all.

This study, quite simply, conveys the reality that neither current nor prospective residents were engaged in decision-making with regards to Renaissance schools and recent Camden developments. It appears policy makers made decisions impacting Camden based on perceived desirable redevelopment results achieved in other cities discounting the uniqueness of Camden, based on their own assumptions as to what people want in Camden, or out of political interest. In the final analysis, the need for decision-makers to engage with, and listen to (McClish & Bacon, 2002), their constituents in

efforts to forward beneficial, effective public policy cannot be overstated (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

Limitations of the Current Study

The small sample size used in this study, thirty participants, dictates the importance of demonstrating discretion in generalizing its findings from this study of current Camden residents and prospective residents to the general population of Camden, and other urban areas experiencing similar phenomena. Additional research with a larger pool of participants is encouraged to expand on the findings elicited from this study's small sample size. This study was designed to capture and highlight the perspectives of current and perspective Camden residents, and in that I employed a recruitment design of reaching potential participants through local community organizations (Sampson, 2008; 2010), I am aware of the possibility that those interviewed are more politically, and civically knowledgeable, perhaps than the general Camden public.

Another limitation of this study, is that no participants identifying as a prospective Camden resident, had children currently, which potentially influenced their communicated willingness to send their children to public schools in Camden, their perceptions of Renaissance schools as a non-viable option, and their perceptions of redevelopment efforts in Camden in general.

For future research, it may be beneficial to employ a looser recruitment strategy that can include resident participants that are not affiliated with active civic groups, in addition to going further to explicitly recruit prospective residents currently parenting school-age children as their views with respect to education in Camden might have been different if faced with the real, rather than conceptual, possibility of their children

attending Camden public schools which are overwhelmingly attended by low-income minority students.

A final limitation of this study is investigator bias due to the researcher being the facilitator of preliminary data collection, data collection, data analyst, and the researcher having interest in the subject as he a current Camden resident, and educator in a Camden public high school. Researcher positionality should be considered when interpreting research findings.

Conclusion

This study sought to provide both current Camden residents who are, overwhelmingly, low-income and minority, and prospective Camden residents who are, overwhelmingly middle-class and white, the opportunity to communicate and highlight their perception of Camden's imposed Renaissance schools along with current Camden redevelopment projects. This qualitative study employed the usage of focus group and individual semi-structured interviews comprised of few scripted questions which allowed participants to speak freely with minimal interference and guiding from the researcher. This study was framed using standpoint theory that explicitly embraces and highlights the voices of marginalized populations as the central unit of analysis for us to better understand how power is dictated upon (Bettez & Hytten, 2011), and is perceived by those with little agency (Collins, 1990). Although many participants offered information consistent with what is suggested in current literature with respect to the lingering existence of urban pathologies and the lack of influence low-income minorities have in decision-making impacting their communities (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Lipman, 2011), participants' perspectives also identify gaps in existing

research. Such research gaps relate to how Camden residents form opinion about urban public schools, what motivates Camden residents and prospective residents to exercise school choice options, what kinds of choice options are deemed suitable by prospective urban residents, and whether imposing Renaissance schools have the ability to lure non-urban residents to permanently live in the city at all.

Although this study had a small sample size, and results ought not to be generalized to the majority of current Camden residents and prospective residents, or current and prospective urban residents for that matter, it is clear that participants in this study do not believe Camden's citizenry has any decision-making power in policies that impact their city (Phillip, 2012). Further, participants roundly questioned the motivation behind the imposition of Renaissance schools at a time where there is such massive redevelopment efforts in Camden, view Camden's redevelopment efforts and Renaissance schools as a coordinated effort to attract non-Camden residents to live in the city – not to benefit those already living there.

A final conclusion, from a practical standpoint, policymakers and stakeholders would be remiss to dismiss the concerns over the lack of democracy in Camden and prospective residents, also, mentioned that as an obvious issue warranting remediation, and potentially, a deterrent from prospective residents moving to Camden itself. Further policymakers ought to conduct similar in-depth focus group and individual interviews with current residents and prospective residents to identify what their current and future constituents identify themselves what their needs and wants are. Such sustained marginalization of current residents fuels their suspicion and skepticism regarding motivations behind Camden's imposed Renaissance schools, and redevelopment, whether

warranted or not, and, potentially, offends the very prospective residents Camden is seeking to attract.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Neighborhood Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. To fully complete this form please allow yourself about 10-15 minutes. To continue with this activity, you either *are a resident of Camden, or plan on residing in Camden in the future.*

The topic of my study and focus group is to understand how members of the Camden community and/or prospective residents interpret/perceive the new Renaissance charter schools (KIPP, UnCommon Schools, Mastery Charter). I am curious to understand whether people view these newly establish charter schools as part of a larger effort to attract different non-residents to live in Camden, whether the establishing of Renaissance charters influences people's decision to live in Camden or move to Camden, and whether residents see these charters as an effort to improve education for the children of Camden, or part of a larger plan.

My research is not intended to make any value judgments on your personal views or perspectives, but is solely intended to gain a better understand how residents and prospective residents view Camden's new Renaissance schools. All responses will be entered under a pseudonym, if directly used in the written portion of this study, otherwise all data gained from questionnaires will be to gain demographic information and to develop neighborhood profile.

I sincerely appreciate your participation in completing this questionnaire and hope to speak with you further in the future.

Questions

1. Are you a resident of Camden? _____
2. (If Yes) What neighborhood do you live in? _____
3. (If No) Do you plan on living in Camden in the future? _____
4. How soon do you plan on moving to Camden and what neighborhood? _____
5. What is your race/ethnicity? _____
6. Are you a parent of a school age child in Camden? _____
7. Does your child attend a public school or charter school? _____
8. Have you seen Camden changes recently? _____

9. Do you currently want to move out, or live in Camden? _____

10. How do you feel about local government in Camden as in mayor, City Council, Board of Education? _____

11. Your thoughts about Camden's public schools are? _____
12. Does school quality effect your decision to reside in Camden? Why or why? _____

13. Would you send your child to any of the new Renaissance schools? _____

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Protocol

Interviewer: *You all have been selected to speak with me today because you meet the following prerequisites: you are a resident of Camden, or plan on residing in Camden in the future. My topic of research is to understand how members of the Camden community and/or prospective residents interpret/perceive the new Renaissance charter schools (KIPP, UnCommon, Mastery Charter). I am curious to understand whether people view these newly establish charter schools as part of a larger effort to attract different non-residents to live in Camden, whether the establishing of Renaissance charters influences people's decision to live in Camden or move to Camden, and whether residents see these charters as an effort to exclusively improve public education for the children of Camden, or part of a larger plan. My research is not intended to make any value judgments on your personal views or perspectives, but is solely intended to gain a better understand how residents and prospective resident view Camden's new Renaissance schools. I sincerely appreciate your participation in this interview and hope you find this interview to be a friendly and enjoyable experience.*

Interviewer: *If you don't mind, I will be taking notes on your responses, and audio recording our interview.*

Interviewer: *Great! Let's begin.*

1. What are some of the changes you all have seen or heard about in Camden?
2. Tell me your thoughts on Camden's recent changes.
3. Tell me about how do you all feel about Camden public schools?
4. How do you feel about the new Renaissance Charters are opening in your neighborhoods?
5. If you had a concern about recent changes in Camden, who do you go to have your concerns addressed? Who listens to your views?
6. How do Renaissance schools make you feel about education in Camden?
7. Who are these Renaissance Charters and current Camden development intended to benefit?

APPENDIX C: Individual Interview Protocol

Interviewer: *You have been selected to speak with me today because you meet the following prerequisites: you are a resident of Camden, or plan on residing in Camden in the future and participated in our recent focus group. My topic of research is to understand how members of the Camden community and/or prospective residents interpret/perceive the new Renaissance charter schools (KIPP, UnCommon, Mastery Charter). I am curious to understand whether people view these newly establish charter schools as part of a larger effort to attract different non-residents to live in Camden, whether the establishing of Renaissance charters influences people's decision to live in Camden or move to Camden, and whether residents see these charters as an effort to exclusively improve public education for the children of Camden, or part of a larger plan. My research is not intended to make any value judgments on your personal views or perspectives, but is solely intended to gain a better understand how residents and prospective resident view Camden's new Renaissance schools. I sincerely appreciate your participation in this interview and hope you find this interview to be a friendly and enjoyable experience.*

Interviewer: *If you don't mind, I will be taking notes on your responses, and audio recording our interview.*

Interviewer: *Great! Let's begin.*

1. Can you tell me how residents included in decisions regarding education in Camden? Or regarding any changes in the city?
2. What determines, to you, whether a school is "good" or "failing"?
3. What are your thoughts about Camden Schools [public]?

4. What do you feel about Renaissance Charters opening in neighborhoods while public schools are being closed?
5. Do Renaissance schools impact your decision to live in Camden at all?
6. Who do you believe Camden leaders listen to or consider when making education-related decisions? Development decisions?
7. Is there anything else you want to add regarding education, Camden development that I have not directly asked you? Closing thoughts?

APPENDIX D: Participant Matrix

Name	Age Group	Sex	Ethnicity	Camden Residency Status	School-aged Children?	Educational Attainment	Camden School Experience?	Income Level	Neighborhood
Harry	Early 40s	Male	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Low-Income	Parkside
Robin	Mid 50s	Female	White	Current	No	High School	No	Working Class	Fairview
Tiana	Late 30s	Female	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Working Class	Parkside
Shaheed	Mid 40s	Male	Black	Current	Yes	College	Yes	Working Class	Parkside
Rebecca	Late 20's	Female	White	Prospective	No	College	No	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Ryan	Mid 20's	Male	White	Prospective	No	College	No	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Josie	Late 20s	Female	Hispanic	Prospective	No	College	Yes	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Liev	Late 20s-Early 30s	Male	White	Prospective	No	College	No	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Ted	Late 30s	Male	Black	Current	No	College	Yes	Middle Class	Lanning Square
Ms. Pat	Late 60s	Female	Black	Current	No	High School	Yes	Working Class	Lanning Square
Mr. Fussell	Mid 80s	Male	Black	Current	No	High School	No	Working Class	Lanning Square
Ms. Nancey	Mid 40s	Female	Hispanic	Current	Yes	High School	No	Low Income	East Camden
Rashawn	Early 30s	Male	Black	Prospective	Yes	College	No	Middle Class	Fairview
Gee	Early 30s	Male	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Working Class	East Camden
Mar	Early 30s	Male	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Working	East Camden

								Class	
Salaam	Late 30s	Male	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Low Income	North Camden
Ms. Hailey	Early 50s	Female	Black	Current	No	College	Yes	Middle Class	Parkside
Denise	Mid 50s	Female	Black	Current	No	High School	Yes	Low Income	North Camden
Tina	Early 40s	Female	Hispanic	Current	Yes	High School	No	Low Income	Fairview
Johnathan	Early 30s	Male	White	Prospective	No	College	No	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Tone	Late 40s	Male	Black	Current	No	High School	Yes	Low Income	Whitman Park
Leonard	Mid 50s	Male	White	Prospective	No	College	Yes	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Luis	Early 30s	Male	Hispanic	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Working Class	North Camden
Deseriee	Late 20s	Female	Hispanic	Current	Yes	Some College	Yes	Working Class	North Camden
Ms. Chavis	Mid 50s	Female	Black	Current	No	High School	Yes	Working Class	Whitman Park
Ida	Mid 50s	Female	Black	Current	No	High School	Yes	Low Income	Whitman Park
Nelson	Late 30s	Male	Black	Current	No	College	No	Working Class	North Camden
Cordell	Late 30s	Female	Hispanic	Current	Yes	College	Yes	Low Income	Parkside
Mark	Mid 20s	Male	White	Prospective	No	College	No	Middle Class	Cooper Grant/Victor
Ms. Clancey	Early 50s	Female	Black	Current	Yes	High School	Yes	Working Class	East Camden

APPENDIX E: Corporations Relocating to Camden Receiving NJEDA Funds
(Adomaitis, 2015)

Corporation	City of Origin, Distance from Camden	Amount of NJEDA Funds
Webimax. LLC (online marketing)	Mt. Laurel (NJ); 15.5 miles	\$6, 035,000
Philadelphia 76ers (corporate offices; practice facility)	Philadelphia (PA); 4.6 miles	\$82, 040,507
Holtec International (nuclear plant production)	Marlton (NJ); 12.9 miles	\$260,000,000
Plastics Consulting (plastics work)	Camden (NJ); 0 miles	\$3,920,000
DioGenix, Inc. (biotechnology)	Gaithersburg (MD); 146.6 miles	\$7,455,000
Lockheed Martin (defense contractor)	Moorestown (NJ); 8 miles	\$107,000,000
Cooper Health (healthcare)	Camden (NJ); 0 miles	\$39,990,000
Subaru (corporate operations)	Cherry Hill (NJ); 4 miles	\$117,832,868
Volunteer of America (non-profit social work)	Collingswood (NJ); < 1 mile	\$6.337,5000
Contemporary Graphics and Bindery	Pennsauken (NJ); <1 mile	\$33,900,000
American Water Works (water company)	Voorhees (NJ); 14.5 miles	\$164,187,735
Chef'd, LLC (online food delivery ordering system)	El Segundo (CA); 2,735 miles	\$19,000,000
Great Socks LLC	UNAVAILABLE	\$15,000,000
EMR Eastern (Scrap and recycling)	Bellmawr (NJ); 6.4 miles	\$252,750,000