THE CONTINUUM OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE: SUSTAINING EXCLUSION THROUGH SCHOOL CLOSURES

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In this paper we demonstrate the utility of structural violence as an analytical device to make visible intergenerational patterns of exclusion obscured by institutional arrangements initially established to represent and defend community interests. We apply an interdisciplinary critical analysis of the history of economic and social marginalization of neighborhoods to the recent closure of seven neighborhood elementary schools in South Sacramento. By stressing the importance of distribution as an important social arrangement that can cause injury to individuals and populations, we demonstrate how disparate impact, briefly defined as the unequal distribution of resources that affect life chances, has current as well as future effects on households and neighborhoods. We argue that patterns of structural violence are not only contingent upon historical processes but are also embedded prospectively, or in other words, into the future of neighborhood stability. We find that the structural violence continuum is a phenomenon embedded in the past, present, and future in a manner that constrains the inclusion of certain neighborhoods in the social and economic life of urban settlements.

Keywords*: school closure, economic divestment, desegregation, structural violence*

1. Introduction

> The court finds based on admissible evidence in the record that the school closures will have a disparate impact on racial minorities… But disparate impact is not enough to establish success on the merits on an Equal Protection claim (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, July 22, 2013, p. 28)[1]

On July 22, 2013, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California denied the motion by poor and working class immigrant families for a preliminary injunction to suspend the closure of seven elementary schools in South Sacramento. The court determined that the case, *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, did not meet the legal standard for an injunction ruling. The plaintiffs had placed three claims before the court, arguing violation of

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[1] *Arriaga* was decided prior to the recent U.S. Supreme Court Ruling that changed the standards for disparate impact cases regarding the intent to discriminate (see *Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs v. Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.,* June 25, 2015, 576 U.S., 2015 WL 2473449).

the following: Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; Americans with Disabilities Act; and Procedural Due Process. Early in her order, Judge Kimberly J. Mueller noted, "Even as the court assumes significant hardships will be imposed on plaintiffs as a result of the schools' closing, that assumption alone does not justify weighing plaintiffs' hardships against those of the District if a preliminary injunction were granted" (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, 2013, pp. 1-2). The court ruled the plaintiffs had "not satisfied the first 'likely success' step of the legal analysis required when a party seeks an injunction" (p. 2), which involves evaluating the plaintiffs' evidence and arguments within "time-tested rules of evidence" (p. 2). Nonetheless, in her ruling, Judge Mueller indicated the closures "will have a disparate impact on racial minorities" (p. 28).

While the court may not be "free to undo a decision even if it perceives that decision as flawed in more than one respect" (p. 2), we take Judge Mueller's ruling as a necessary challenge for us to engage a wider audience in analyzing school closure through the lens of structural violence. While we underscore the disparate harm for poor and low-income students of color in urban districts associated with school closure, we also draw on testimonials provided by South Sacramento parents in an effort to extend their demands for justice beyond the purview of the court and to a more inclusive public arena of citizens, educators, policy makers, and academics. In doing so, our paper makes visible structures obscured in the legal construction of justice, reflecting social, economic, and psychological mechanisms of exclusion.

1.1 A Question of Justice

> I believe the school district targeted schools located in an area that is predominantly communities of color who are uneducated and poor. The school district rushed the school closure and did not provide adequate time for parents to be informed and engaged. In particular this rushed process harms parents like me whose primary language is not English and have difficulty navigating the education system. This is an injustice and a hardship on my child and me as a parent (Declaration of Chao Chang, 2013, pp. 2-3).

The sense of moral exclusion expressed by Chao Chang, a Hmong parent from South Sacramento underscores how psychological mechanisms operate within institutions or organizations whereby individuals or members of a group are perceived as psychologically distant (Opotow, 2001). As a result, they are more likely to encounter exclusion from opportunity structures and access to resources that is more often gradual, chronic, and invisible (Opotow, 2001). The sense of moral obligation on behalf of those in decision-making roles toward members of the marginalized group is weak. With weakened ties, those on the periphery become an afterthought. Their struggles are not interpreted as injustice, and conditions of exclusion persist. This arrangement of relationships and hierarchies operates implicitly. Opotow (2001) explains:

> Structural violence…is gradual, imperceptible, and diffused in society as "the way things are done," including whose voice is systemically heard or ignored, and who gets particular resources and who goes without them…Because structural violence blurs agency and no one person directly injures another, those harmed may

themselves be seen as responsible for their own debilitation (cf. Lerner, 1980) (Opotow, 2001, pp. 151-152).

In an effort to make visible the structural conditions contributing to school closure and the consequences of this policy, we employ an interdisciplinary critical analysis of the history of economic and social marginalization of neighborhoods of South Sacramento. We then connect this history with the current set of conditions related to school closure to locate the entanglement of privilege and exclusion. While we are deeply dissatisfied with the court's ruling, we employ the tools available to us as social scientists and public intellectuals (Burawoy, 2008; Martín-Baró, 1994) to move beyond the search for a discriminatory "actor," a task that compromises the substantive links between injustice and school closure as it has occurred in urban districts across the United States. Locating evidence of structural violence experienced by the very communities seeking recognition from the courts for designations of harm, we also underscore evidence of political organizing among parents in South Sacramento.

1.2 School Closure as a Threat to Neighborhood Health

Research shows a strong relationship between the presence of a school and the economic stability of a community. School quality capitalizes into increased home values, which can also determine the likelihood of commercial and business development within a neighborhood (Chung, 2005). Grogan and Proscio (2000) note that the presence of a school is probably the most important factor a family considers in deciding to remain in or flee an area. Schools are anchors of surrounding neighborhoods as they contribute to the social and economic well-being of nearby community. However, when a school is closed in an already impoverished neighborhood, an economic engine is lost right along with the community's ability to use the school facility as a public space for organizing sports activities, neighborhood afterschool programs, and youth and parent engagement programs. School closure threatens the social and economic stability of South Sacramento – a problem now frequently experienced by cities across the United States[2].

Research on elementary school closure reveals disproportionate impact for students of color, poor and working class students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities (Steggert & Galletta, 2013). The announcement of school closure is typically followed by a drop in achievement. Research indicates variation in academic success in the years following school closure, including sustained depressed performance, as well as a return to a similar trajectory of performance for most students (Brummet, 2014; de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009; Engberg, Gill, Zamarro, & Zimmer, 2012); other studies point to improvement following school closure but note the achievement level remains below proficiency (Carlson & Lavertu, 2015). Safety ratings of a receiving school, its proximity to the home neighborhood, and the desire to sustain relationships with teachers and support personnel are a key concern of families experiencing school closure (Deeds & Pattillo, 2015; de la Torre, Gordon, Moore, & Cowhy, 2015). Already

[2] School closure is particularly evident in major cities across the U.S..According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2015), the number of school closures has fluctuated, with 1,193 schools closing in the 2000-2001 school year and 1,840 in 2011-2012.

high rates of student mobility may be exacerbated by school closure, impacting the social and academic progress of students (Steggert & Galletta, 2013).

2. Structural Violence as an Analytical Device

The concept of structural violence as critical theory and as an important analytical device gained weight with Galtung (1969), who explains how individuals and groups can experience violence when there is no direct actor responsible. The violence, Galtung argues, is built into social structure and shows up as unequal power. Ultimately, the violence appears as unequal life chances when resources are unevenly distributed. Stressing the importance of distribution as an important social arrangement that causes injury to individuals and populations, Galtung notes how structural violence takes root when the power over resource distribution is not equally distributed (p. 171). From this view, the structural violence framework encourages us to look for differences within large-scale social structures – differences of power, wealth, privilege and health that are unjust and unacceptable (Farmer, 2004). Through this lens, concentrations of poverty, racial segregation, unemployment and underperforming schools become important clues for detecting and locating episodes of structural violence – events usually attributed to individual and/or cultural differences impacting access to opportunity. Accordingly, Farmer (1996) cautions against conflating forms of structural violence with traditional individual-centered cultural explanations for human suffering.

We build upon the work of Farmer and Galtung and argue that structural violence takes hold when public protections are violated. Urban settlements depend on a complex municipal system of shared resources and multiple forms of social and physical infrastructure. Residents collectively place trust in government institutions to distribute resources equally in a manner that represents their interests, promotes social order, and advances the responsibility for community well-being that is implied in public policy (Commons, 1931). We use indicators of unequal resource distribution, in this case school closures, as evidence that public protections have been compromised.

Farmer (1996) sees structural violence as embodied in a series of adverse events in the experience of people who live in poverty or are marginalized by racism, gender inequality, or a "noxious mix of all of the above" (p. 308). We deploy structural violence as an analytical tool by using what Farmer (1996) refers to as a "*simultaneous* consideration of various axes" (p. 274), whereby analytically intersecting axes reflect multiple forms of structural oppression and designations of social status that disadvantage individuals and groups (Crenshaw, 1991). In looking at the intersection of families' spatial location within a geopolitical area of economic disinvestment, their immigrant background, socioeconomic status, skin color and language use, the forces at work in structural violence surface and create space for interpretation and possibilities for change. Fine and Ruglis (2009) extend the work of Harvey (2004) in tracing the growth of capital as shifting from the public sphere to private interests. Fine and Ruglis refer to "circuits of dispossession" within which the shift of capital in education flows across multiple public sectors, disproportionately resulting in loss for poor and working class youth of color and "carving a racialized geography of youth development and dispossession that appears to be so natural" (p. 20).

We use the structural violence lens to demonstrate how circuits of dispossession become operational through the loss of public protections – laws and policies set in place to promulgate and ensure the equitable distribution of public resources. The recent school closures in Sacramento, as we shall see, reveal how this process of dispossession is indeed a historical process of disinvestment from segregated neighborhoods that leads to reinvestment in more well-to-do neighborhoods, a process that contributes not only to the city's racialized geography but also to its racialized arrangements of social and economic relations.

To decipher the "noxious" relationship between structure and distribution that can exert social inequality systematically (Farmer, 2004), we use a community case study approach to investigate the preexisting conditions that contributed to the racially-concentrated school closures in South Sacramento. Our data sources include archival material dealing with the history of the city and the district, much of which was used as legal evidence in *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*. We also studied the testimonies of parents, grandparents, and guardians speaking on behalf of the children and community affected by the school closures. Yin (2008) suggests that the case study method is preferred when research questions are more explanatory and are likely to deal with operational links needing to be traced over time. Thus, the method provides an ability to deal with a full variety of evidence needed to explain why certain phenomena take place over time and within a particular place. The case study method allows us to uncover the historical dimensions of a societal phenomenon or setting and reveals relationships of power, the racialized ordering of the city's social relations, the communities in which they take place, and "the historical structure of domination and subordination" that is characteristic of racialized space (Smith & Feagin, 1995, p. 4).[3] Our use of city and district history and the current conditions for families experiencing school closure integrates our disciplines of sociology (Jesus) and social psychology (Anne)[4]. The case study, therefore, provides us with a useful approach to understand the social dynamics that continue to produce a racially disparate impact in the access and distribution of social goods – a key indicator that structural violence is present.

3. History of Economic Disinvestment in South Sacramento

It is important to consider these school closures within the context of Sacramento's long history of racial segregation to assess potential issues of inequity as playing a critical role in contributing to social and spatial patterns of structural violence. To properly contextualize the dynamics of structural violence, we change the unit of analysis from schools to neighborhoods, an analytic approach producing data the court found relevant "…because it supports a showing of a disparate impact and serves to highlight procedural irregularities that may suggest a discriminatory purpose" (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, 2013, p. 10). The concentration of school closures in South Sacramento indicates that class and racial disparities have occurred in student displacement and that the closure criteria were not evenly applied to all schools. In this section, we document the racialized concentration of residents in Sacramento along with the associated intergenerational patterns of economic disinvestment and social

[3] See also Hernandez, 2009a, 2012, and 2014.

[4] Jesus Hernandez and Anne Galletta were both asked to be expert witnesses in the *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District* case on behalf of the parents' efforts to secure an injunction on the school closures.

isolation. A historical analysis underscores the accumulation of social and economic exclusion overtime within South Sacramento.

South Sacramento is a cluster of neighborhoods with many signs of crippling intergenerational poverty, all of which are rooted in the history of its development. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending through the 1920s, South Sacramento served as an entry point to the region for much needed European immigrant labor and was home to families of diverse ethnic backgrounds. During this critical point in the development of Sacramento neighborhoods, developers began to use racially restrictive covenants - exclusionary property deed restrictions promulgated by the real estate industry and designed to prevent nonwhites from integrating all-white neighborhoods. The use of these covenants became a device for residential market segmentation that promoted the expansion of a racialized residential geography in the Sacramento region (Hernandez, 2009a; 2014).

Like the rest of the nation, Sacramento experienced a housing boom in the 1940s and 1950s fueled by Federal New Deal housing programs aimed at economic recovery following the Great Depression (Jackson, 1985). However, these federal programs institutionalized the use of racially restrictive covenants and mortgage "redlining," which prohibited federally sponsored housing credit in racially integrated neighborhoods. The resulting market policies engineered a racially and economically bifurcated geography of housing driving Sacramento's first wave of urban sprawl. In turn, these policies effectively confined over 75% of the city's nonwhite population to the older Downtown business district known as the West End (Hernandez, 2009a), an area redlined by the Federal Housing Administration during the 1930s. The area became a source of blight as redlining prevented buyers from obtaining financing for improving or purchasing property.

The inability of West End property owners to participate in normal market exchanges led to a drastic decline in the value of redlined real estate. By the late 1950s, federal housing policy continued to fuel disinvestment and blight in Sacramento's Downtown district and then led to opportunistic urban redevelopment and freeway construction projects in redlined areas where approximately 75% of the city's non-White population resided. Through urban renewal (Hernandez, 2009a), these projects forced the removal of entire non-White communities to areas in Sacramento without racial restrictions. Consequently, South Sacramento quickly became a primary repository for these displaced low-income, non-White households.

While South Sacramento had long been the center of interstate transportation routes for the region, new caverns of freeways constructed in the 1960s redirected vehicle access away from its once vibrant business and retail districts. Between 1960 and 1980, the racial composition of Sacramento residential space was redefined and drastically altered; a second episode of mortgage redlining coupled with realtor gatekeeping steered nonwhite residents into neighborhoods without race covenants and marked a time of economic disinvestment and racial tensions in South Sacramento.

As a result, historic public and urban planning policies in the 1950s and 1960s successfully shifted the bulk of Sacramento's poor, non-White residents to South Sacramento communities like Oak Park, Glen Elder, Fruitridge, North Franklin, Lemon Hill and Meadowview. Once prosperous racial and ethnic minority entrepreneurs from the West End now struggled through post-redevelopment displacement and disinvestment with a new clientele unable to support local businesses. Increased policing combined with high crime rates inherited from downtown redevelopment projects, substandard housing, along with desegregation plans that sustained White privilege and high unemployment rates kept South Sacramento constantly on the edge of

civil unrest. Finally, refugee resettlement programs following the end of the Vietnam War initiated a steady stream of immigrants from Southeast Asia that amplified existing conditions of poverty in South Sacramento. As such, a series of institutional processes resulted in the intergenerational accumulation of poverty and economic demobilization of South Sacramento, leaving neighborhood social systems in the state of crisis that continues to this date.

As suburban sprawl racialized opportunity, the boundaries between White and non-White residency established by housing discrimination and regional disinvestment are replicated within more recent educational policy. Economically fragile and excluded from access to credit, families from South Sacramento have been unable to integrate into the mainstream economy. They remain vulnerable to multiple forms of predatory economic extraction, financial disaster and now fiscal austerity initiatives. This racially segmented north-south geography is now the baseline for measuring every social and economic ill of the region. It is an intergenerational process of social closure based upon a geopolitical collective action that ties together social boundaries, legal rule making, and economic policy into everyday life in South Sacramento. It is this racialized location of disparate impact that provides the context for implementing school closure policy in the Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD).

3.1 District History Mirrors Patterns of Residency

Closely linked to Sacramento's history of residential segregation are school desegregation policies of the 1960s. We argue that these policies helped shape the current ideological direction of SCUSD and set in motion contemporary patterns of structural violence. The district formed in 1936 during the period of post-Depression residential expansion when New Deal federal mortgage programs redlined Sacramento's racially integrated neighborhoods. The steady pull of non-White labor to Sacramento during each episode of national military conflict and the growth of the Sacramento Valley agricultural and food processing industries during a period of enforced housing segregation intensified the racial imbalance of neighborhoods and district schools (Hernandez, 2009a).

The trend towards containment of racial and ethnic minorities within the City of Sacramento through their exclusion from neighboring suburbs had a direct effect on the racial composition of district schools. Sacramento's racially segmented housing market, rapid suburban expansion during the post war years, and displacement from downtown redevelopment concentrated Asian, Black and Mexican households near older inner city schools. In contrast, the district's rapid expansion resulted in new schools that primarily served children in predominantly White suburbs and created "a kind of double segregation" of class and race (Holden, 1969, p. 21). By 1960, the ethnic composition of district schools clearly reflected the segregated housing patterns of the community; one in four district schools had a marked ethnic imbalance in 1963 (Citizens Advisory Committee [CAC], 1965). From 1954 to 1968, the district built a total of 20 new elementary schools with 19 of them in predominantly White neighborhoods outside of Sacramento's 1950 city limits (Holden, 1974). The sharp contrast in the district's investment of capital projects and resources in the suburbs when compared to older neighborhoods clearly heightened the dissatisfaction of immigrant parent and parents of color with the district (Holden, 1969, p. 22).

In August of 1963, the burning of Stanford Junior High School located in the predominantly Black community of Oak Park brought the issue of segregated schools in Sacramento to the forefront.[5] When the district proposed the use of portable classrooms at the fire-damaged site, Oak Park parents initiated legal action to prevent the reopening of the Stanford campus claiming that de facto segregation denied students equal educational opportunities and deprived them of their state and federal constitutional rights. The Sacramento Superior Court found that Stanford was indeed racially segregated and ordered a complete evaluation of the assignment of Stanford students and a statistical analysis on the racial composition of district schools (CAC, 1965, p. 1). In addition, California operationalized the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1965 with the McAteer Act, requiring school districts in California to take action towards halting racial isolation when acquiring school sites and in establishing attendance areas.

The district's interpretation of the McAteer Act helps us to understand the ideological foundations for current patterns of structural violence in the district. Desegregation strategies centered on altering conditions in segregated schools and by default, segregated neighborhoods. With little attention given to the causes of racial isolation, district policies placed restrictions on the growth of schools that served predominantly students of color that were found to be de facto segregated. The district removed portable classrooms to decrease the size of schools serving students of color, closed such schools when possible, instituted open enrollment policies allowing students to attend schools outside of their neighborhood, and allowed inter-district attendance agreements and mandatory student reassignments to reduce and control racial imbalances (CAC, 1965, p. 36). While such policies had the potential for facilitating racial and economic integration, they favored White families by not requiring Whites to be bused or by not closing White schools.

The district's 1966 desegregation plan, a combination of school closures and restricted enrollment branded as "Project Aspiration," involved over 1,000 students. More school closures within the following three years required transferring an additional 800 or more students. Along with the mass transfer of students came a consolidation of attendance areas that assigned "segregated" territory serving students of color to areas in more well-to-do White neighborhoods. Predominantly White receiving schools reaped a windfall of funding and resources for reading, counseling, compensatory education, medical assessments, and study centers in addition to administrative staff and services. Lunch programs were established in receiving schools as displaced students lived so far away from home that they could not go home to eat lunch. Many displaced students were bused as far as eight to 12 miles from their homes each day[6].

Although the district's interpretation of the McAteer Act prevented new schools from being built in segregated communities of color, district policies did not deem exclusively White communities initially protected by racial restrictions on residency as "segregated" and therefore

[5] The community of Oak Park was originally a European immigrant working-class residential enclave. The onset of downtown urban redevelopment during the late 1950s saw the displacement of thousands of poor Black and Latino residents to areas of Sacramento without deed restrictions on racial residency. Oak Park, subdivided prior to the use of race covenants, absorbed a disproportionately large portion of the Black population emigrating from downtown redevelopment sites and by 1963 was predominantly Black and Latino (Hernandez, 2014).

[6] See memo on Actions Towards Equal Educational Opportunity Taken by the Sacramento City Unified School District, 1963-1968 from Donald E. Hall, Assistant Superintendent, Planning and Research Services, February 20, 1968 found in The Anna Holden Collection, MSS 543, Box 16, Folder 10. The Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

continued to build schools in these neighborhoods. When coupled with the rapid school construction taking place in sprawl-driven White suburban neighborhoods, the mass transfer of students and resources clearly placed schools with predominantly students of color at a disadvantage. Changes in attendance boundaries actually helped older, more advantaged middle-class White neighborhoods within city limits, which were experiencing declining enrollments, which at the time faced concerns about the potential for school closures (Holden, 1969, p. 70).

Increasing enrollment by changing attendance boundaries made it possible to keep White middle class schools open in neighborhoods protected by race covenants that should have been closed, thus sustaining an important financial asset, since home value is impacted by school availability. Moreover, because schools are employment centers that contribute to neighborhood economic stability, the changes to boundaries had the effect of shifting public funds from Black to White neighborhoods as well as maintaining important job centers. The resource transfer under the umbrella of desegregation was so stark that one parent commented in a public meeting "so then a poor child is given two pennies and he ends up with one penny for him and one penny for the 'rich' child"[7].

As a result, Project Aspiration ultimately took form as a process of cataclysmic disinvestment that mirrored Sacramento's patterns of economic development and racial containment of the period. The region's intensive infrastructure investment during the period remained focused on suburban communities, which in turn prompted inner-city divestment and neighborhood decline (Hernandez, 2009b). Because of the historic racialized boundaries, the favoring of schools in the White neighborhoods led to increased economic isolation of communities of color.

3.2 Building Blocks in School Closure Edifice: The Entanglement of Privilege and Exclusion in Desegregation

Desegregation created a new form of redlining, which occurred in the redrawing of attendance boundaries to control racial imbalances along with the shifting of capital and students via Project Aspiration. School closures and student displacement proved to be a critical factor in the flight of middle class residents to suburban development. The district policies severely stunted the economic and social growth of neighborhoods of working class immigrant communities and communities of color. One-way desegregation policies had the effect of pulling those homeowners and renters with more resources away from their neighborhoods to be closer to schools where their children had been transferred. Those who remained in these neighborhoods were the most vulnerable economically without the means to relocate. In her 1969 report for the Center for Urban Education on Sacramento desegregation efforts, Anna Holden summarized public meeting comments on the effects of Project Aspiration from members of the Oak Park Neighborhood Council who complained that "closing the neighborhood schools had discouraged community efforts and accelerated the movement of parents from Oak Park" (Holden, 1969, p. 74). Clearly the local school situation was critical to keeping residents and homeowners in their neighborhood. In South Sacramento, the shifting of students and capital was a key contributor to the economic and social divestment that would soon produce increasing racial isolation in poor

[7] See the memo to the community from The Oak Park Neighborhood Council, Inc. Sacramento, California, June 24, 1967, found in The Anna Holden Collection, MSS 543, Box 16, Folder 9. The Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

and working class urban neighborhoods surrounded by racially integrated first-ring suburban space, as well as fueling continued patterns of sprawl for those seeking distance from inner-city tensions.

Project Aspiration's one-way movement of students and capital in the 1960s also reflected the stigma imposed on non-White communities during an important historical period of escalating racial tensions across the nation and in Sacramento. The resistance to racial integration in Sacramento prompted intense housing and employment discrimination, realtor gatekeeping, and heavy-handed police actions against immigrant residents and residents of color (Hernandez, 2012). Sacramento residents in 1964 unanimously voted "Yes" on Proposition 14, a statewide initiative overturning the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963[8].

The steady push among Whites to maintain racial and economic isolation provoked aggressive organizing efforts from Black and Latino neighborhood groups and local chapters of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets. On-going racial tensions in South Sacramento peaked in 1969 with repeated episodes of violence between White and Black students at Sacramento High School and a police raid on the Black Panthers' headquarters and food locker used for breakfast programs in the heart of the Oak Park business district. The civil unrest that followed in response to the police raid destroyed what remained of the business district on 35th Street. Oak Park and other communities throughout the greater South Sacramento area were never able to recover from the social and economic stigmas that plagued riot-stricken communities across the US (Hernandez, 2012).

Local civil rights groups such as Understanding Each Other and the Congress for Young Adults called for two-way busing to achieve integration goals. However, strong opposition came from the heavily segregated newer White residential areas, especially River Park, an area described as a "natural enclave" but without "open" housing at the time. In the summer of 1966, fearing that their children would be bused to schools in the heart of Sacramento's racial turmoil, parents blanketed the area with petitions aimed at preventing two-way busing[9]. Holden (1969) reports how White residents during a public hearing accused the Citizens Advisory Committee of "trying to mongrelize our people" (p. 52). Although some protest against busing came from inner city Black and Latino residents, Holden states "the wellsprings of opposition were the heavily segregated newer White residential areas" that would absorb receiving students but were unwilling to send middle class White students to schools serving primarily working class immigrant students of color (p. 52). Volatile racial tensions clearly made two-way desegregation impossible to consider, leaving the district superintendent and other staff to state "a broader two-way approach was not politically feasible" (p. 59). Echoing the sentiments of district staff, community supporters of the district plan also pointed out that "from a political point of view, two-way busing had no chance of approval" (p. 59). The combination of racial stigma and fear ultimately defined desegregation as a one-way movement of students of color out of their communities and was seen by district officials as *the only reasonable solution* to achieving racial balance in Sacramento schools[10].

[8] However, two years later, the California Supreme Court struck down Proposition 14 concluding that it violated the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Supreme Court later upheld the decision. See *Reitman v. Mulkey*, 387 U.S. 369 (1967).
[9] See "Desegregation Busing Planning Not All Roses." The Sacramento Bee, September 3, 1966.
[10] See "Summer Events Aid City School Integration plan." The Sacramento Bee, Summer 1966, found in The Anna Holden Collection, MSS 543, Box 16, Folder 8. The Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin at Madison. Even one-way desegregation plans met resistance from White residents. Holden (1969, p. 51) reported that unpublicized meetings at Caleb Greenwood Elementary School in the heart of White middle class River Park

In this manner, efforts in the name of equity through racial desegregation replicated White privilege and reinforced the marginalization of students of color in the district. The policies of one-way desegregation displacing poor and working class students of color, informed by an ideology that did not view predominantly White schools as problematic, reveal the multiple forms of social exclusion at work in structural violence. The closure of schools attended by students of color and the burden of longer bus rides for these students were not seen as exclusionary but as necessary to achieve desegregation. For some progressive Whites, this was a means of addressing equity. For those Whites opposed to desegregation, the entire policy was a disruption of the normative practices sustaining their racial privilege.

At the same time, the geographical and social distance between White communities and communities of color, as noted by Opotow (2001), increased the likelihood that policies that have adverse consequences for communities of color would not be viewed as problematic. Indeed, within the equity arguments for desegregation, the hardship experienced by poor and working class communities of color was not given sufficient weight. Policies that replicate relations of privilege and exclusion often contribute to abject conditions among the excluded groups, thereby shifting the analysis of injustice from structural conditions to lack of individual agency. Geographical and psychological distance is sustained as a result, and difference is reinforced.

3.3 Culture a Key Component of Structural Violence

The effect of Project Aspiration was the sustained privilege Whites were afforded in the district. Predominantly White neighborhoods and schools were not considered segregated or problematic but instead seen as "safe-havens" for culturally disadvantaged students to gain the important assimilation skills needed to function properly in society. The district rationalized one-way busing policy as a mission to help poor disadvantaged students – a mission which provided access to better educational opportunities that could only be found in predominantly White neighborhoods with cultural and economic advantage. Within this cultural hierarchy and racial ordering in Sacramento, the question of who was considered "segregated" never was necessary. The self-segregation of Whites was assumed as the natural product of a better way of life. Through this logic and the normative dimension of White privilege, the root cause of de facto segregation went unnoticed and instead reinforced the very problem desegregation policy was intended to solve.

This cultural argument and the institutional arrangement of laws and policies lie at the very heart of structural violence. The district's desegregation policies demonstrated the sorting and ordering of residents in a manner that reserved privileges for specific groups. The cultural "scripts" used by the district became a key part of a collective process that altered access to opportunity to produce desired outcomes. Tilly (1998) explains that such scripts require the use

were held to organize against plans to move students of color into White schools. In 1966 parents also questioned whether bringing "Negroes" into Caleb Greenwood would lower property values. Anti-busing hysteria was clearly a "panic reaction of White homeowners who settled themselves away from the pressing problems of Blacks and the inner city" (Holden, 1969, p. 53). While the district did not pursue two-way racial desegregation, it moved forward with continued efforts to desegregate schools through one-way busing of students of color.

of categorical inequalities to facilitate the shifting and monopolizing of valuable resources to groups of power. The emphasis on displacing those students challenged by racial and economic inequities to schools in neighborhoods where resources are abundant instituted a framework for manipulating school enrollment boundaries that favored schools in predominantly White neighborhoods facing declining enrollment.

In our analysis of this Sacramento history, the case study provides important clues for detecting and locating episodes of structural violence. Similarly it uncovers events usually attributed to individual and/or cultural differences impacting access to opportunity. Here we have noted intersecting axes of oppression in real estate practices, urban renewal, and desegregation policy, processes that reflect circuits of dispossession (Fine & Ruglis, 2009), and accumulation of disinvestment on the part of poor and working class people of color paralleled by absorption of the spoils by more advantaged White communities. This "noxious mix" (Farmer, 1996) occurs in a context characterized by deeply unequal relations of power and social distance, which then creates the space for practices and policies to be seen as routine, "normal," and the way things are, so that psychologically there is little recognition of how such practices might be exclusionary or inequitable. Acknowledging these cultural scripts and the method of deployment is essential to understanding the nature of structural violence that again unfolds in the form of school closures in South Sacramento.

4. Sustaining Patterns of Exclusion: School Closure

This history of educational policies and economic development in Sacramento traces patterns of exclusion from opportunity structures not afforded the residents of South Sacramento. Racial covenants, mortgage redlining, and the absence *or* denial of basic opportunity structures have contributed to the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and economic isolation of this part of the city. This area is also defined by the concentration of immigrants from Southeast Asia and Central America. The impact of school closure on South Sacramento students must be analyzed through this historical lens.

Our analysis of the current conditions draws on data sources related to *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, which sought a preliminary injunction to enjoin the closure of seven schools in South Sacramento, including court declarations by family members providing testimony of the impact of school closure and court exhibits supporting the plaintiffs, including parents, grandparents, and parent organization representatives. At the time of the court hearing, the district's racial/ethnic make-up as a whole was 37% Hispanic or Latino, 18.3% Asian, 17.4% African American, 19% White, and 7% dual racial or ethnic character (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, 2013, p. 12).

Here, we study family testimonies, conceptualizing the "materiality of the social" as the regularity of patterns of structural violence that result in durable barriers to education, employment, health and well-being (Farmer, 2004). In this manner, our analysis makes "ethnographically visible" (p. 308) and foregrounds what exclusion means for South Sacramento families. In the section below, we organize themes evident in the testimonies into two thematic categories: (1) disruption of education and (2) uncertainty and betrayal. We close drawing from our sociological and social-psychological traditions in the discussion section, underscoring the durability of constraints on agency evident in family testimonies and situated in a broad history

of social, economic, and psychological exclusion and more recently set in the context of patterns of resistance to school closure policies across urban centers in the United States.

4.1 Disruption of Education

In the court testimonies, family members narrated their efforts to nurture and sustain relationships with teachers, home and school strategies for learning, individual education plans (IEP's), and afterschool programs to ensure children succeeded academically. This was most evident in the narratives of family members concerning children with disabilities. Families testified that displacement due to school closure jeopardized parent-teacher investment in children's social and emotional development and academic progress. In the testimonies, families spoke of afterschool programs in place that provided enrichment and homework assistance for their children; they noted strong building principals; and they described active parent involvement in their schools. They pointed to the disruptive impact of the school closure policy, which undermined key sources of social capital for their children. There was no assurance that educational programs, some of which they had advocated for their children and collaborated with educators to develop, would be available in the schools to which their children were being transferred. Jessica Arriaga, for whom the lawsuit is named, moved to be in walking distance of her son's school (Declaration of Jessica Arriaga, 2013). Ms. Arriaga testified that her son, who had repeated first grade after being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, progressed the past year after six months of planning with his teachers: "Damian has adjusted to a consistent daily schedule and has begun to build a relationship with his classmates and teachers, and to develop confidence to read out loud and participate in class" (p. 2).

In addition to the disruption of children's education, the court testimonies revealed existing parent volunteerism and leadership that would also suffer a disruption. Patricia Gentle spoke of volunteering at her child's school five days a week. The school, a five-minute walk from her home, was closed (Declaration of Patricia Gentle, 2013). The disruption of critical social networks and students' educational programs prompted parent resistance to the school closures. At the same time, testimonies suggest that the agency of parents in speaking out against the school closures threatened family's financial stability as resistance interfered with employment demands. Ms. Gentle testified, "My husband works evening night shifts and because of the school closures he has had to miss work in order to voice his concerns at various school site meetings" (Declaration of Patricia Gentle, 2013, p. 2).

In this manner, the district's plan to "right-size" itself meant a disruption of education and of critical social and economic networks for some of the district's most vulnerable children and families. Family testimonies included concerns among parent and guardians who did not speak English, did not have work hour flexibility, and did not have the material resources to buffer the disruption they and their children would experience in the closing of their neighborhood school.

4.2 Uncertainty and Betrayal

Evident in the testimonies is the degree of uncertainty parents and guardians have experienced during the announcement of the school closures and in the months following. Family members noted uncertainty in the following areas: knowing which particular schools would receive their

children; finding continuity in the education of children with disabilities; having access to afterschool programs; and securing safe transportation to the receiving school. Court testimonies also suggest that family members did not receive direct communication from the district in a timely manner regarding the closure of their children's schools, learning of the closures from the newspaper or local radio stations conveying news in the languages of the city's immigrant communities. Once the Board of Education voted, the provision of information continued to be sparse and inconsistent. Parents reported being told that their children would be attending one school, only to learn that was not the case, or facing barriers in choosing a school. Chao Chang testified that she attempted to enroll her son at a school of her choice, but she was told he could not enroll there.

In addition to concerns about the lack of information afforded to families of children in the closed schools, families also noted the lack of community involvement in the school closure process as the Board of Education developed and voted on its plans. Parent Teacher Association representative Edward Carmago testified:

> The SCUSD announced the closure on January 16, 2013 and held only one Community Meeting at C.B. Wire on February 4, 2013, which was less than three weeks before the Board of Education voted to close our school on February 21, 2013. During the Community Meeting, over three hundred parents, students, teachers, and community members attended to voice opposition and concerns. However the superintendent and 6 of 7 school board members did not even attend our one community event! (Declaration of the representative of the Parent-Teacher Association of Clayton B. Wire Elementary School, 2013, pp. 2-3)

Furthermore, Carmago reported that his child's school was identified for closure but did not fit the district's criterion of an under-enrolled school. This is also noted in the judge's ruling, where Judge Mueller noted that the procedures employed by the district in identifying schools for closure were "troubling," and she stated:

> The fact that the District eliminated schools from the lists in the First and Second Right-Sizing Reports, based on criteria other than efficiency, contradicts the District's representation that this round of closures was based on a single, objective criterion. Moreover, the District's reasons for removing certain schools from consideration do not appear to have been consistently applied (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, 2013, p. 31).

Additionally, the court ruling noted,

> There also is a disparity between the schools with the lowest operating efficiency that remained on the closure list and those that did not: the percentage of white students whose schools were listed for closure was reduced from 12.1% to 6.65% between the time the District first calculated efficiency and then later approved the final revised closure list (*Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District*, 2013, p. 28).

In this manner, the families providing testimony and the judge herself pointed to an imbalance

by race in terms of which families bore the consequences of a policy to "right-size the district." Because the the district has 72% of its students qualifying for free- or reduced-lunch, and with 73 of the district's 82 schools having students of color as 50% or more of the students, the issue of disproportionality requires a more complex and multi-dimensional analysis. The location of schools within neighborhoods with particular histories of privilege or exclusion serves a more complete rendering of patterns of structural violence.

Table 1 shows the percent of non-White student enrollment for each campus closed by the district and the percent of non-White residency in the neighborhood in which the school was located. Closed schools had an average non-White enrollment of 93%, and schools closed were located in neighborhoods where 85% of those residing in the neighborhood were people of color. In contrast, schools removed from the original school closure list created by the District's 7/11 Committee[11] had an average non-White enrollment of 76% (Table 2)[12]; however, the schools removed from the closure list were located in neighborhoods where an average of 36% of people of color resided. It is clear that schools slated for closure in census tracts with the highest concentration of White residents were removed from the closure list.

Table 1. Enrollment and Residency for SCUSD Campuses Closed in 2013[13]

	% Non-White Enrollment	% Non-White Residency
C.B. Wire	96%	74%
Bonnheim	87%	61%
Fruit Ridge	95%	83%
Mark Hopkins	97%	83%
Huntington	93%	78%
Maple	95%	97%
Washington	87%	42%
Average	93%	74%

Table 2. Enrollment and Residency for SCUSD Campuses Removed from Closure List[14]

	% Non-White Enrollment	% Non-White Residency
James Marshall	59%	40%
A.M. Winn	57%	43%
Tahoe	83%	28%
Bret Harte	88%	30%
Mark Twain	85%	52%
Kit Carson	85%	22%
Average	76%	36%

The high proportion of non-White students in predominantly White neighborhoods (see Table 2) indicates that the pattern of one-way desegregation initiated during the 1960s continues with this latest round of closures. The district again diverts students and resources away from neighborhoods of poor and working class communities of color to support White and more advantaged older neighborhoods with declining enrollment. With South Sacramento being a "port of entry" for immigrant families from Central America and South East Asian countries, countries with traditionally much larger families than US born families, it is apparent that the very neighborhoods where schools are forced to close are also the primary source for future district enrollment.

[11] The District's 7-11 Committee advises the Board of Education on the reuse, repurposing and disposition of school buildings and vacant sites not needed for school purposes. Under California law (Education Code sec. 17389), the Committee must be comprised of at least seven members but no more than 11.

[12] See Hernandez, 2013. Report on Sacramento City Unified School District's Proposed Elementary School Closures Prepared for Plaintiffs in *Arriaga, et al. v. Sacramento City Unified School District*. United States District Court, Eastern District of California, Case 2:13-cv-01167-KJM-EFB.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

5. Constraints on Agency a Key Characteristic of Structural Violence

Analyzing school closures in Sacramento through a structural violence lens allows us to understand inconsistencies in the interaction between communities and the institutional structures entrusted with their protection and well-being. Public institutions are entrusted with the task of equally distributing access to social goods and with protecting the right to equal distribution. Community members, as an act of good faith, social order and cooperation, grant power and leadership to public institutions by trusting that these implied protections can be counted upon to uphold their interests. As a result, communities become reliant upon institutional rule-making actions that guide access and distribution to goods. When this trust is violated, recourse is presumably provided by our legal system. However, in the case of school closures in South Sacramento, the history of economic disinvestment makes it clear that limited resources to finance legal representation played a key role in the ability of community members to seek effective recourse to protect their interests. While the district hired an influential and expensive corporate law firm to protect its position of administrative control, community members were left to their own devices to access legal support. Despite gaining the assistance of a pro bono civil rights attorney who prepared the required court documents to initiate legal action, the community was unable to raise funds for expert witnesses such as forensic accountants to properly present the data that community members uncovered in their review of the district's financial records. Funding for pre-trial legal work such as depositions to conduct discovery was simply not within the financial means of the community. Given the speed with which the district moved to close schools, time for fundraising was not even an option. In seeking recourse, community members found themselves facing a unique adversarial process funded by the very tax dollars they contribute for equitable access to education.

These mechanisms of exclusion endured by South Sacramento community members also exemplify how violence occurs without protagonists. Although the Court clearly found that the school closures indeed have a disparate impact on racial and ethnic minority residents, the community's Equal Protection claim could only be supported by the court if the intent to discriminate by the district was present[15]. As a result, the sole remaining avenue for recourse and restorative justice worked instead to maintain and solidify the vertical dependent power relationship between the school district and the residents it presumably serves.

We emphasize how structural violence is directly related to the violation of public protections created for ensuring equal distribution of public resources. The repeated abuse of said protections by the school district triggered community organizing that focused on intervening in the presumably race-neutral public process of reclaiming public resources for redistribution. However, the constraints on exercising rights for accountability, recourse, and restitution relegate the institution-community relationship to one of absolute dependence. Farmer (2004) frequently uses the phrase "constraint of agency," in describing structural barriers or structural inequality,

[15] However, in *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.* (U.S. Supreme Court, No. 13-1371) the U.S Supreme Court ruled on June 25, 2015, that a plaintiff may establish liability, without proof of intentional discrimination, if an identified business practice has a disproportionate effect on certain groups of individuals and if the practice is not grounded in sound business considerations. The *Arriaga* case was decided in 2013, two years before the change in how the Court now reviews disparate impact claims.

and then to extend that concept to structural harm. It is clear that financial resources of residents, a condition driven by historical patterns of concentrated poverty in South Sacramento, prevented residents from seeking redress for a policy they viewed as deeply unjust.

Within these relations of dependency, however, there exists moments of rupture in which "the way things are done" is de-naturalized and reframed as exclusionary. Those dispossessed of capital resist, as demonstrated in the protests and community mobilization against one-way desegregation in South Sacramento. This is also evident more recently in U.S. cities confronting significant numbers of school closures. Protests, hunger strikes, walkouts, and teach-ins on the part of poor and working class communities of color underscore the organization of community members against the shifts in capital away out of their neighborhoods. Arguments on the part of parents opposed to school closure find support in the research, which underscores the severing of relational and spatial ties and tenuous claims of improved student achievement (Steggert & Galletta, 2013).

While community resistance is evident, structural violence persists as the critical response on the part of communities is weakened by the muting of critique on the part of philanthropies convinced of the utility of educational privatization, including school closure. These entities fund programs that employ community members and support local programs, blurring processes through which public protections are diminished. Finally, the transfer of capital from the public sphere by way of privatized access to public facilities violates public protections once guaranteed by the state. As in the case of one-way segregation in the 1960s, the current discourse on school closure fails to acknowledge the shifts in capital from less to more advantaged neighborhoods. Only when history is illuminated and past exclusionary practices are retraced, does the racialization of this policy emerge with clarity.

6. Conclusion

In the *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District* case, the court appeared undeterred by its own clear admission of the disproportionality of school closure impact on the families of South Sacramento, as noted in our opening quote. The court fell short of assigning such policy enactments as unjust. In our writing, we moved beyond the purview of the court to analytically surface relations of power and illustrate how inequality is "structured and legitimated over time" (Farmer, 2004, p. 308).

We find that the structural violence continuum is a phenomenon embedded in the past, present, and future in a manner that constrains the inclusion of certain neighborhoods in the social and economic life of urban settlements. School closures in Sacramento reflect the city's long history of (re)allocating public resources on the basis of neighborhood racial composition and reaffirm the accumulation by dispossession process – the shifting of capital from the geography of racialized poverty to the geography of affluence.

To reveal what anthropologist and Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) refers to as the materiality of the socio-historical process, where "moments" in history set the stage for future historical narratives, we have located the lived experience and spoken words of the families with children displaced by school closure within the city's history of housing and school segregation. In this manner, the testimony of the families in the *Arriaga v. Sacramento City Unified School District* case speaks back to the structural forces within these very durable constraints on agency. In so doing we demonstrate the utility of structural violence as an

analytical device to make visible intergenerational patterns of exclusion obscured by institutional arrangements initially established to represent and defend community interests.

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