Examining School Leadership in New York City Community Schools

Stacey Campo
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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Examining School Leadership in New York City Community Schools

by

Stacey Elizabeth Campo

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Nicholas M. Michelli

_________________________  __________________________
Date                           Chair of Examining Committee

Anthony P. Picciano

_________________________  __________________________
Date                           Executive Officer

Stephen Burghardt

Terrie Epstein

Nicholas Michelli
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

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The community school model is rooted in John Dewey’s (1902) conceptualization of the public school as a hub for the community. This work has evolved over a hundred years and recently experienced prominence in the public eye as a fundamental component of New York City’s school turnaround policy. This dissertation describes findings and recommendations from interviews with leaders in ten New York City community schools. These interviews are triangulated with analysis of the New York City school environment survey using both faculty and parent responses. This research investigated the values, processes and behaviors of leaders that hinder or contribute to the partnership between community based organizations (CBO) and the Department of Education (DOE).

Principals of community schools must undergo a paradigm shift, shaped by the understanding that leading a community school is different from a traditional public school, and requires specific skills and behaviors. Primarily, school leaders need to cultivate a distributed leadership approach supported by practices of mindfulness and the cultivation of collaborative systems. In order to create a healthy school climate, they must develop processes to collaboratively create school values and vision and periodically revisit how these values are being supported by the community school. This work is hindered by a lack of specific policies supporting community school management and daily practices, as well as an unclear definition
of roles and hierarchy. An emerging theme was the disproportional cultural capital of CBO staff compared to DOE staff, and the author provides recommendations to address the accountability imbalance which reinforces this dynamic between the two factions.
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1.1 Introduction

The community school approach as a turnaround strategy in New York City has generated the need for further examination for both long-term practitioners as well as administrators and policy makers who are newer to the model. If this process is shortchanged or underfunded, or if leaders are not supported and do not invite the entire school to participate in the evolution, the true potential of the community school strategy will not be met. With these high stakes, an examination of community school leadership is vital. Within this context, this study aims to begin a dialogue of the purpose of this work. How does it relate to democratic schooling and critical pedagogy? What role, if any, does social justice play in this approach? Can a community school approach transform a school community by infusing the school with services and organizing practices? One director describes this work as part of an educational equity strategy grounded in social justice, but acknowledges that not every school leader utilizes this lens, as she explains:

I think that the way I approach it and why I do it is coming from a social justice background, is that community schools is an education equity strategy. I believe that wholeheartedly. Does everyone analyze it and think of it that way? No, but fundamentally that's what it is. I think that if you are conscious and intentional about perceiving it that way and then operating a community school that way from a place of equity and wanting to promote equity and build equity. (Community School Director, School 5 & 10)

This study unpacks the potential of this approach to engender transformative, critical community-based schooling and considers how the mind-set of leaders can shape the community school approach.
This dissertation examines a connection between distributed leadership and democratic schooling, supporting the idea that these are crucial elements of an excelling community school as defined by the National Center for Community Schools’s continuum of community school development. This dissertation also utilizes Peter Senge’s (2012) components of a learning organization to consider the role of dialogue and reflection in the process of developing learning schools. It investigates the role of cultural capital as an exclusionary factor that can hinder the creation of a cohesive community school. This research and conceptual framework will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

1.2 Problem statement

There has been very little research focusing on the leadership partnership between community school directors (CSDs) and principals in community schools. New York City schools do not provide comprehensive policies or guidelines for community schools. Schools partner with CBOs in many different ways, and the community school partnership has varying influence on the school climate because of lack of policy, discrepancy in funding and structure between schools, disparities in experience and expertise of CBO partners, and external community based factors such as needs and resources. This study investigates leadership partnerships against the backdrop of a difficult educational climate, a movement toward neoliberalism in education, and the growth of the nonprofit industrial complex. It considers the role of democratic education and school climate research by the National School Climate Center in constructing the concept of a “healthy school climate.” A healthy school climate is essential to both effective schooling and the creation of an excelling community school.
1.3 Statement of Purpose

This study focuses on schools in different stages of community school development to learn what helps and hinders the partnership by examining the processes, values, and behaviors that drive the relationship and school systems. By interviewing school leaders from ten schools, this study identifies trends that can be replicated in supporting school leaders in partnership work. This dissertation also utilizes information from the school environment survey to understand how teachers and parents view the leadership of the school and to triangulate findings from the interviews. This research is constructed with a paradigm of critical theory, and considers the influence of race, socioeconomic status, education, and power dynamics that impact this work. Furthermore, it is built on the belief that the aim of a community school is to create more porous boundaries between the school and the local community so that the school can act as a community hub, and so that community, in turn, can influence the process and content of schooling.

1.4 Overview of Methodology

This study utilizes a methodology of narrative inquiry and a paradigm of critical theory. Narrative research “studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories of their lives” (Cresswell, 2003). This study follows a sequential mixed method approach (Cresswell, 2003) and attempts to triangulate and expand upon the findings from the interviews with survey data. The interviews were held first, followed by the survey analysis. The data that has been analyzed are transcripts and survey results. The school environment surveys are publicly available on the Department of Education website, and the interviews were audiotaped.
and transcribed. The data from these interviews was analyzed via critical discourse analysis utilizing James Paul Gee’s (2011) toolkit.

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**Figure 1.1 Overview of Study**  Source: Created by author

### 1.5 Research Questions

**Guiding Question and Subtopics:**

In this dissertation, there is one primary question that is guiding this work and four sub-questions that will be support this inquiry. The guiding question for this research is as follows:

*How do the processes, values, and behaviors of CBO and DOE school leaders contribute to or detract from a school and CBO partnership?*
Senge (2006) explains that systems thinking is a framework that considers the way in which processes and behaviors are interrelated. It is this concept that informs why this study looks at the values of school leaders and how those values are articulated and inform the systems enacted within the school. Spillane (2005) identifies the importance of processes and patterns in understanding the practices of leadership in schools, which is the key to understanding distributed leadership. The questioning of school leaders’ values, and where they originate, is influenced by Senge’s (2012) ideas of mental models, which he describes as deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or images that “influence how we understand the world and how we take action.” Thus, for the purposes of this study, the aim of uncovering leadership values is to extricate both the mental models of school leaders as well as to understand the ways in which those leaders articulate and build a shared vision for the school. Furthermore, discussing behaviors encourages interviewees to explain what systems they have in place and how they support their values with action.

The secondary questions that will guide this research focus a bit more on understanding how the partnership impacts the social, political, and cultural climate of the school. The secondary questions are as follows:

- **How has the partnership impacted the school climate?**
- **What outcomes reflect the priorities of the school and how do they inform practice?**
- **What are parent and faculty impressions of school leadership?**
- **What social and political structures impact the partnership?**
- **How are cultural and racial differences navigated or discussed within the school community?**
The rationales for these secondary questions lie within aspects of the conceptual framework and theoretical framework and are explained as follows.

**Subtopic 1: School Climate**

The National School Climate Center (2015) operationalized school climate as “the quality and character of school life.” They have gathered extensive research supporting the correlation between positive school environment and the academic and social success of students. For this study, our investigation of school climate includes the ways in which school leaders plan for and consider the importance of school climate. This study contemplates feedback from the school survey that explains how teachers and parents experience the school’s climate. This analysis of school climate employs Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus and Anyon’s (1981) reflection of the cultivation of a habitus of failure. What are the expectations and how are the staff in the building articulating these expectations to children? How are students and staff members given an opportunity to reflect upon or impact school climate? Do they feel they have the power to influence change within the school community?

**Subtopic 2: Outcomes**

In our current educational climate, outcomes have largely been equated with test scores by federal and state policy. This study interviews school leaders about which outcomes are prioritized and how education policies shape these priorities. How are leaders sharing data as part of their practice, and are there spaces for critique of this prioritization of test scores over other forms of data? What do students, teachers, and parents see as the administration’s priorities, and how does that impact their experience within the school? Lastly, are certain
outcomes seen as the domain of CBO staff, while others are solely the responsibility of the DOE school leaders?

**Subtopic 3: Social and Political Structures**

Critical theory is a guiding paradigm for this research, and is explored in more depth within this chapter. Because of this, the understanding for both the research and its analysis is that all work in schools is viewed through a political lens. This dissertation will contemplate the policies that impact this work and how these policies are interpreted in each community school by school leaders. Similarly, it will consider what, if any, policies are created by school leaders within the school. Democratic education and questioning the role of schooling in preparing students for ethical citizenship that leads to a critical lens is considered within this subtopic. Ultimately, this inquiry will uncover leaders’ underlying beliefs or mental models about the purpose of education and the ways in which these beliefs filter to DOE and CBO staff members. Also, through the school survey, we will learn the extent to which teachers and parents have an agentic voice within the school.

**Subtopic 4: Cultural and Racial Differences**

This subtopic considers critical race theory’s conclusion that racism is endemic in all aspects of life, particularly schooling. Milner’s (2010) ideas about disrupting the normative conceptualization of pedagogical race neutrality also guide the research on this topic. Part of this inquiry is identifying leadership’s guidance in creating culturally relevant pedagogy and ways in which the school invites discussion of race and racism within the school. How are school leaders supporting teachers in cultivating what Linda C. Powell Pruitt (1997) describes as a discourse of
potential to counteract a habitus of failure (Bourdieu, 1986; Anyon, 1981), and how do they encourage teachers to cultivate a holding environment in their classrooms, enabling all students to safely discuss the extent to which race and racism influence their lives (Pruitt, 1997)?

Specifically, how can a school capitalize on the use of the community in this work? Can opening the school to parents and the community make room for families to influence pedagogy or knowledge creation, rather than relying on a one-sided transactional process in community schools?

1.6 Critical Theory Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs, or a worldview, that defines the nature of the world and the individual’s place in it. A paradigm also considers the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. The paradigm guiding this work is critical theory, which lends itself to qualitative inquiry, as it “requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of the inquiry; that dialogue must be dialectical in nature to transform ignorance and misapprehensions into more informed consciousness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The aim of this research as guided by critical theory is

the critique and transformation of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind, by engagement in confrontation, even conflict. The inquirer is cast in the role of investigator and facilitator, implying that the inquirer understands a priori what transformations are needed. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113)

Because it was performed by an insider researcher, this study is built on the past experiences and ideas of an activist scholar who has been working within community schools for many years.
This vantage point will be further discussed in this chapter and throughout the dissertation. Critical theory asserts that “social inequalities and oppressive institutional structures can be unveiled, critiqued, and most importantly, transformed through the process of political engagement and social action” (Giroux, 2009). This theory was created by members of the Frankfurt School, who assessed the emerging forms of capitalism and domination and the role of emancipation in this research guided by critical theory (Giroux, 2009). It is both a school of thought as well as a method of critique. This work attempts to move past a simplified assessment and to identify layered meaning that considers context. The Frankfort School introduced the idea of dialectical thought, which combines critique and the creation of theory. Critical theory rebukes the idea of neutrality in education and the positivist notion of experience.

1.7 Key Terminology

A few key concepts that are discussed throughout this study are defined below:

**Mindfulness**

Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as “awareness, cultivated by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2006). While this is the most cited description of the concept, Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) expand a bit on this idea to elaborate on a concept of mindfulness in action.

Mindfulness is continuous scrutiny and refinement of expectations based on new experiences, appreciation of the subtleties of context, and identification of novel aspects of context that can improve foresight and functioning. Mindfulness requires flexibility, vigilance, and openness. (2006, p. 238)
This serves as a definition that coordinates well with the work of leaders and the importance of reflection in practice in the complex and hectic school environment. Hoy et al. (2006) also discuss the concept of organizational mindfulness, in which the organization is set on improvement through a preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operation, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. Essentially, the organization embodies the same openness and reflective nature of a mindful individual.

**Partnership**

Partnership consists of two or more parties that share common goals which cannot be reached by either party independently (Callahan & Martin, 2007).

**School Climate**

The National School Climate Council explains that school climate is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Center for Social Emotional Education, 2010).

**Values**

Values are (1) concepts or beliefs, (2) pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance (Schwartz, 1992).
Community Schools Concept as a Continuum

As Supovitz and Christman's (2003) policy brief reinforces, community schools often look different in structure, but their purposes are generally similar. They can be large or small, urban or rural, and have many moving parts. Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012) make recommendations for community schools to maintain strong partnerships. These recommendations are “to ensure all partners share a common vision, establish formal relationships and collaborative structures to engage stakeholders, encourage open dialogue about challenges and solutions, engage partners in the use of data, create district level capacity to support community school work, and leverage community resources and braid funding streams to create strong and supportive programming” (Blank et al., 2012). Clearly, supporting a strong partnership is complex work. This dissertation will examine the research on partnerships and the type of leadership necessary to cultivate strong working relationships.

The National Center for Community Schools constructed a continuum of community school development to account for the variation and categories of development of a community school, see chart 3.3 in methodology chapter (p47). Community school development falls into stages of exploring, emerging, maturing, and excelling. Schools are staged based on management and governance, staffing, programs and services, parental involvement, community involvement, evaluation, and sustainability. Because of the many moving parts of this development process, a school may be excelling in sustainability and evaluation but only exploring in parental involvement or management and government. Often schools can move up and down this continuum, particularly if there is a change in leadership. However, for this dissertation we will focus on school leadership, and we will examine this continuum in depth in the methodology chapter.
Dryfoos (1997) explains the community school model as an “ill-defined assortment of school-based programs spread out across a continuum, from simple one-component partnerships between a school and an outside agency” to “sophisticated, complex, multicomponent, multiagency collaboratives.” However, for the purposes of this work, the complexity of the partnership lies in both the number of services provided as well as the depth of collaboration between the school and partner. This may best be illustrated by three case examples from different cities in the United States to show the diversity within this model.

One case example is the Burnham Anthony Academy for Mathematics and Science (BA) in the South Deering section of Chicago. In 2003, BA partnered with lead agency Youth Guidance to become a community school. In their over ten years of partnership, the school expanded their academic offerings to create an extended day. Using many of the day school teachers, they brought in clubs for enrichment, like Spanish, chess, and science club. Youth Guidance added more sports, recreation, and wellness services throughout the day. They offered programming like Girl Scouts and male mentoring groups that provide a social, emotional focus for students. Youth Guidance also provided a clear framework explaining their commitment to social justice, which they posed as a pre-condition to the partnership. The three tenets of this work are: 1) prioritizing the voice of young people and family buy-in for school improvement, 2) emphasizing the strengths of youth and adults and their role in school improvement, and 3) focusing on the social well-being of the whole child rather than only on academic success (Whalen, 2008). This partnership is aligned because the above priorities coincide with the school’s foundational beliefs based on Comer’s School Development Process, which organizes the school based on six domains of growth: cognitive, psychological, linguistic, social, ethical, and physical, and these beliefs are guided by principles of consensus, collaboration, and no-fault
(Comer’s School Development, 2015). The unification of vision and focus on structured collaboration and the diverse nature of programming and community/parent involvement would place this school as mature or excelling on the stages of community school development.

Another example of a community school will be labeled as I.S 100 to maintain anonymity. This program was closed due to lack of funding and administrative support. This community school in the South Bronx was primarily focused on out-of-school time programming, which included after-school recreation, homework help, arts, and additional enrichment opportunities. Mental health services were provided by a full-time social worker and emergency resources were available for families in crisis. While these programs occurred within the school, the after-school and day school services were very separate. Collaboration with the principal did not occur in a structured or regular way, and meetings and professional development activities of the school and the CBO occurred separately. The principal called upon services only during emergencies. There was little to no discussion of vision and purpose. While both the school and the community based organization (CBO) were working with the same children, parallel processes were occurring, and this lack of teamwork placed this school in the exploring stage of development. Likewise, the CBO did not have designated staff to work with the community or families, and thus parent outreach largely consisted of teachers reporting classroom achievements or deficits and telling parents what they needed to do to support learning at home. The partnership was initiated by a previous principal who took early retirement, and the principal who inherited the school was less committed to this partnering work. This is another factor that complicates the community school model. Should the partnership rely solely on the prerogative of the principal or should all partners face external expectations regarding partnership? School leaders have expressed concerns about relinquishing too much power or
control through partnership, and this seemed to be what concerned the principal at I.S. 100. In the case of I.S. 100, the building was broken into a campus and the CBO worked to partner with the additional three high schools in the building. Many of the other building principals were interested in services, but the partnering agency lacked funding for more sustained or significant partnership. This example highlights how education policy and external factors, like a newly created campus, lack of funding, and a change in principal, have significant impact on community school development, underscoring that this is not a static process.

The development of Cincinnati Community Learning Centers is a unique case example for community schools because the Cincinnati school board passed legislation (CPS School Board Policy 7500) mandating that every school should be a community learning center and serve as a center of activity for the neighborhood. Cincinnati is the only city in which there is a policy mandating this work by educational administration. Lack of policy is a key factor influencing the absence of structure guiding this work. Community schools are generally funded by a braiding of state, city, federal, and private monies (Dryfoos, 1997). In all Cincinnati Learning Centers, as with our specific case example, Oyler Learning Center, external partnerships are managed by a resource coordinator, and statistics from the school and community are used to guide the work. Oyler is a K-12 school in a low-income, urban Appalachian neighborhood in the Lower Price Hill section of Cincinnati (CLC Case Study, 2015). Some of the programs offered at Oyler are mentoring, recreation, after-school programming, financial literacy, job training, early childhood programming, and health programming. There is a high level of leadership buy-in to the model because the school board passed school policy 7500 making every school a community school. Because of the deep
collaboration with the department of education and the many programs seamlessly offered during day and after school, Oyler can be considered an excelling community school.

Reflecting upon B.A., I.S. 100 and Oyler, we find many similarities, challenges, and obstacles that exist for the model. Hopefully, these case studies speak to the variation that can occur along the continuum of community school development. This study will focus primarily on the leadership of the community school, prioritizing the partnership in this work. However, we will consider how policy influences this partnership. Likewise, the study will consider how a community school impacts school climate, including communication and respect within a school, as well as how it provides opportunities for parent involvement. Lastly, the larger question of how a community school creates democratic education within schools or creates a space for critical pedagogy is an underlying theme in the analysis of school climate. To what extent are we creating community within the school, critiquing the local community, and discoursing about community capital? These components will be discussed in the literature review chapter.

1.8 Rationale and Significance

While the concept of a community school has existed since 1902, the community school model in New York City has become more popular with Mayor Bill de Blasio’s creation of the Community Schools department and his utilization of the model as part of a school turnaround strategy. Working in this model and conducting discussions with colleagues with a lifetime of experience within community schools led this researcher to focus on the leadership partnership. Within this field, it is believed that leadership can determine the success of a community school. Particularly important is the principal’s attitude and mindset towards leadership and their willingness to partner with the CBO director. Community school directors reflect a cognitive
dissonance among leaders in many schools. The organization that hires the director explains the work in terms of partnership, but Department of Education policies designate the principal as the one school leader who is responsible for everything that happens within the school and culpable when things go wrong. This research strives to further understand this phenomenon and how it impacts school climate, with the belief that cultivating a clear understanding of leadership structure and power within the school is essential to the success of the community school model. Because this dynamic has not been fully explored and addressed on a policy level within New York City, there remains untapped potential for the community school model. Identifying values, processes, and behaviors of community school leaders that lead to an excelling school will help guide policy and practice for this work moving forward. This research aspires to influence the way principals and directors are trained and supported, in the hope of cultivating community schools with the potential to transform the community and the current approach to schooling in New York City.

1.9 Role of Researcher & Research Assumptions

The superb professor and writer Jean Anyon used to tell her students, “all research is me-search” and Maxwell (2005) explains that basing your research topic on your own experience is motivation, and advises researchers to be transparent about biases and assumptions. This dissertation is no exception. This researcher is an insider researcher who has been working within community schools for nearly 15 years as the employee of a community based organization. The decision to engage in a study built on qualitative interviews is influenced by the desire to elicit narratives and to investigate sensitive topics—like social and cultural capital and power and racial dynamics—that are difficult to explore without cultivating rapport between
investigator and interviewee. Being an insider also enables the researcher to better understand context and to ask nuanced follow-up questions. This study has been created under the paradigm of critical theory, operating with the assumption that power dynamics are constantly at play and influenced by politics, race, culture, socioeconomic factors, and capitalism. Based on this researcher’s experience within the model, the assumption going into this study was that Department of Education employees, and school leaders, hold more power and cultural capital than their CBO partners. This assumption has been developed through working in six different community schools in the South Bronx. Capital within schools is also influenced by the union, which serves as a protective force for the Department of Education staff—a force that is not available to CBO partners. To protect against potential bias, all interview participants were asked overtly in a non-guiding way about the differences between CBO and DOE staff and how those differences influenced their work. This dynamic is further explored throughout this study, but should also be considered for future research. The description of the researcher perspective will be written in the first person, as it represents the values, background, and opinions of the author of this dissertation.

As an educational researcher as well as a community school director, educational equity and a holistic approach to children and families are my guiding values. I was born the only child of a father who worked for the NYC Department of Education as a teacher and guidance counselor and a mother who had a degree in counseling—so the apple didn’t fall far from the tree(s). My parents embedded in me a love of learning and a desire for social justice. I followed in my father’s footsteps, working in the same Bronx community where he taught. When I was young, my parents chose to use their resources to move from New York City to the suburbs, where they knew I would be provided a high-quality public education. This reflected some of
the frustration my father experienced working in New York City public schools, and replicates the larger trend of NYC teachers who raise their own children outside of the system and community where they work. Throughout my career, I have often contemplated the comparison between the middle-class education I was provided in the suburbs of Westchester and the education offered in Bronx community schools. Thus, it was surprising when one of the principals interviewed for this study explained that through partnering with their CBO, the school provides “students who are from the poorest congressional district in the country, a middle-class education.” I am very optimistic that this approach has the potential to cultivate increased educational equity, but this has not been my experience in every school where I have worked. I believe school leadership difficulties are part of the reason this ideal has not been met.

As a social worker, I see the community school model as a system developed by the social work ethic of meeting families and children “where they are at.” I believe every community school should be built by the needs, desires, and movements created by the people in that community. I am motivated by the idea that education should address the whole child, ensuring that they are socially, emotionally, and physically healthy and educated.

My years of experience in community schools in the South Bronx have shown me that teachers and school staff are often overwhelmed and frustrated by the work of educating students who often carry much more than math textbooks to class. Thus, infusing the school with additional support to address health, hunger, housing insecurity and more makes perfect sense. Yet, as a school leader I have seen partnerships severed due to ongoing conflict with the principal. In my role as a leader, I have often felt frustrated, unappreciated, and overwhelmed by a disorganized school with an unhealthy school climate. What is preventing this simple, if not obvious, idea from transforming urban schooling?
Community schools in New York City show increased attendance and parent participation, however, other indicators, such as college readiness and state test scores compared to other cities, are not as positive (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017). Is the bureaucracy of such a huge system hindering the potential of this model? How can principals and directors lead schools that provides social services support and community change? I have seen schools that are enriched with services and support but still struggle with trust and the creation of a positive school climate. It is difficult to bring the community into the school or to address community issues when the school climate lacks trust, interpersonal relationships, and safety. I believe a functional leadership partnership can create a healthier school community. Thus, while this research is motivated by my own frustration and struggles in New York City schools, it is also inspired by my hope for the transformative potential of the model.

1.10 Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is composed of six chapters: an introduction, an overview of history and policy, a literature review, a description of methodology, presentation of data and analysis, and a final discussion with recommendations. This first chapter has introduced the work: its guiding paradigm, relevant definitions, the role of the researcher, and the rationale for this study. The second chapter discusses the history of community schools and the policy, or lack of policy, that guides this work. The third chapter is the literature review, which outlines some of the research that influences the rationale for this study and the community school concept. This chapter also discusses the conceptual frameworks which are influenced by Peter Senge’s (2012) components of a learning organization and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of cultural capital. The data chapter includes a lengthy analysis of interview content and a short review of trends from the
school survey’s school leadership questions. In the discussion and recommendations chapter, a few trends that emerged from the research are outlined, and concrete recommendations are given for leadership practice, policy, and training.
Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the origination and definition of community schools, some of the early community schools that emerged as founding models, the evolution of policy and funding to support this work and a snapshot of the model currently within New York City. In this review, some of the stumbling blocks with the model emerged early on, regarding leadership, community involvement and the untapped potential for civic engagement begin to emerge. Understanding the ways in which the community school model has both evolved and remained consistent over time will inform the research questions that are the foundation for this dissertation.

2.2 Community School Model

In 1967, Robert Mason described the community school model in his edict on urban education. While there may be variation in the services and structure of community schools nationally and internationally, he promoted the same general idea of a community school, which is the concept of the school as a hub “available for use by social agencies, health agencies, and interested citizen groups on a seven-days-a-week, twelve-months-a-year basis (Mason, 1967).” His idea is the same as those echoed throughout Dewey’s 1902 speech advocating for the school as the social center for all community life. In this acclaimed speech, he declares that to prepare students for citizenship, they must socialize and engage with the community (Benson, 2007).

We see both Mason and Dewey echoed in the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) definition:
(A community school) is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone— all day, every day, evenings and weekends. (Coalition for Community Schools website, 2015)

The Coalition for Community Schools provides both the simple and broad idea of a community school, and will serve as the fundamental definition for this paper. It proposes infusing schools with additional services and supports, attempting to ensure that young people in the school are physically and emotionally ready to learn. However, it also hints at a pedagogical or theoretical approach that could be grounded in Dewey’s pedagogical creed (1897) the idea of “real-world learning and community problem solving.” This chapter will discuss the roots and evolution of community school and how this work relates to Dewey’s (1902, 1916) conceptualization of schooling.

2.3 Early Community Schools

Benson (2009) posits that the community school is based on two fundamental ideas. The purpose of school is to educate for democratic citizenship, and schools and communities are intertwined and interdependent. These concepts reflect Dewey’s participatory democracy, which has a historical tie to the community school model. In the 1900s, through collaboration between Jane Adams and the Chicago Hull Houses, Dewey and his progressive education colleagues, the settlement house philosophies and programming were brought into schools. By 1913, seventy-
one cities in twenty-one states began functioning with the school as a social hub for the community (Benson, 2009). These were in both urban and rural settings. In the early 1900’s schools were opening with dental offices, art galleries, employment centers, movie theaters, civic and democratic clubs. However, the democratic and civil nature of these centers dissipated with World War I.

One of John Dewey’s students at Teacher’s College, Elsie Ripley Clapp, started and documented two early community schools. The Ballard School in Jefferson, Kentucky, from 1929 to 1934, brought rural life into the classroom, provided health screenings for all children, and used art to draw the community into the school through plays and interactive exhibits. Next, Clapp moved to Arthurdale, West Virginia where she worked with a committee to build a community school with consideration of the needs of the community. However, this new venture started slowly, she wrote about the evolution of purpose and empowerment within the school community:

“A community school is not provided - it grows by concurrence and consent. It is a function, never a system. It is a joint production, the result of living and learning, shaped and guided by many events, as well as ideas and purposed and by the feelings and responses of a large number of people, above all by the desires and the needs of the people whose school it is (Clapp, 1971).”

This quote speaks to the idea of distributed leadership, which grows out of collaboration and joint ownership, a concept that is fundamental to the model and will be discussed further within this dissertation. It also creates space for community schools as an avenue for social justice, as it is shaped by events, feelings and collective action. It highlights that the development of a community school cannot be top down, it must be collaborative, and will developed through
bringing in many voices and cultivating a communal vision. Likewise, it is a strategy that takes
a long time to develop. With time, the Authordale building and the curricula grew. Critics of
Clapp argued that while the schools that she built became community hubs, she failed to address
larger issues like race, unemployment, poverty and the social, political and economic forces that
influenced the communities like Jefferson and Arthurdale (Stack, 1999).

Another notable early community school was in New York City, it was Leonard
Covello’s Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem (Benson, 2009). The school was
guided by Covello from 1934 to 1956, and during that time he brought in many services and
campaigned throughout the neighborhood, conducting block by block assessments of community
need, organizing a community sanitation campaign to clean up the neighborhood and
participatory projects to address community housing concerns. Ultimately, the school shifted
focus due to the economic downturn that occurred during World War II, and faculty critique
regarding the role of the school and teachers within the community. One teacher complained, “I
am an English teacher not a social worker” (Benson, 2009), and many became overwhelmed by
the social movements and taking on the personal and financial struggles of students. This
question remains within the practice of community schools, particularly when examining the
partnership between the community based organization (CBO) and the school. How are roles
defined within a community school? Are all staff members within a community school oriented
to a unique vision, which considers the community? What is the obligation of each staff member
in the school?

This sense of community obligation was echoed in the Arthurdale School, and explained
by one of the teachers as follows:
You had to live in the community. We did something in the community almost every night. It was either a women’s club or a square dance or something up at the weaving room or something you participated in. You participated in all the community activities. You were just sort of a part of a family. I did something in the community every night. It wasn’t just a day job.” (Benson, 2009, p.25)”

Both Covello and Clapp made it clear that community building is integral to the work of a community school, as Dewey (1902) argues this type of community engagement and learning is what was stripped from the education during industrialization.

During World War II, urban schools became larger and more bureaucratic systems were created, because of this, there was a natural divide between school and community. In response, community members began organizing to command greater influence in their schools. At that time, unions, parent associations, labor unions and populist and Socialist parties began to advocate for schools as centers, including nurses, social workers, health inspections, and playgrounds (Benson, 2009. Starting in the sixties, community schools were funded from either philanthropies or government grants, this may have been in response to advocacy, but also may have reflected a shift in power form the community to government. Ultimately, an understanding of educational priorities can be mapped with government funding and allocation of resources.

An awkwardly titled film, To Touch a Child (1962) highlights a community school funded by the Mott Foundation and chronicles its creation in Flint, Michigan. In the film, a local philanthropist partners with the physical education director, and eventually the school board and local government for schools to open later. He surveys the community and offered recreation classes, like dancing, swimming, sports and cooking classes to families. In time, teachers began doing home visits and identified additional needs. Based on these needs
assessments, they began offering health screening and support and parent education classes. The film starts with ominous music, discussing the shame of the wasted tax dollars spent on a building that is locked to the public and a small child without a safe place to play baseball. The video includes an interview with the principal, who shares his initial reluctance, he says:

As a school principal, at first, I almost threw up my hands and wondered what in the world is happening to my school. I thought of it as my school. Now somebody else was taking it over at night, using the blackboards, the desks, the custodian was complaining because people were scuffing up the floors that used to be so spotless. But we went along with it, and it turned out to be the best thing that we could have possibly ever done. It used to be the parents here and teachers here. Now some of the teachers are earning extra income by teaching the parents, and some of the parents are teaching too. It used to be parents only came to school to ask how their children are doing, but now children are asking the teachers how their parents are coming along. (Charles Mott Foundation, 1962)

This principal’s conceptualization of the school as “my school” not “our school” is an important piece of this research study. How do these values shape the principal’s leadership approach? What can create a shift in leadership mindset from mine to ours? The film makes an argument that the community school made more economic sense, and in Flint they found when the community was involved with the school, citizens were more likely to vote to fund school initiatives and funding. Likewise, with the partnership between the Mott Foundation and the local government, they built schools with the community school model in mind, including a larger gym, parent room and a library with an eye on both youth and adult learning. Ultimately, what is clear in this early Flint model, is that through tapping into what Dewey (1902) identifies
as an intrinsic need for lifelong learning, as the video emphasizes, the most popular classes were those in the evening filled with community members of all ages.

In the early community school in Flint, the Annondale school and Covello’s school shared some trends that continue to be a struggle for Community Schools. Primarily, in the narratives from these schools we see a shift in expectations for teachers and principals within community schools. We see a model that must be guided by the needs of the community, a constantly evolving guide point that is created through evaluation and collaboration. Ultimately, we learn from these inaugural models that flexibility and creating room for multiple voices are the primary ingredients for this model.

2.4 Policies Influencing Community Schools

The Community School Center Development Act of 1974 focused funding and attention on the cultivation of community school directors. Specifically, it requested an allocation of funds to higher education to train and support the development of community school directors, placing them as central the community school strategy. This act also granted the state the ability to provide funding for the creation of community schools, however, this initiative lost funding in 1981. The 1980s were a time when non-profit and social services were defunded by the Republican led federal government (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004), and the community school movement was impacted by this trend. Interestingly, the bill included a miscellaneous addition explaining that the act does not authorize any department or agency to exercise control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution or school system (congress.gov, 2017). This foreshadows some of the tensions around power and
authority that is often an obstacle within the model. Perhaps because of the sunset of this bill and lack of funding, community schools atrophied during the 1980s.

The 1990’s marked a resurgence of community schools (Benson, 2009), particularly in New York City. This was the beginning of community based organizations co-constructing schools with the Department of Education. Schools were built with the purpose of housing health centers, dental clinics, mental health center, family resource centers, and after-school programming (Dryfoos, 1994). In her 1994 book, Full Service Community Schools, Joy Dryfoos explains that community schools cost between $100,000 and $300,000 annually depending on their comprehensiveness. This range of cost is largely due to a funding structure that can fluctuate with government support. In the 90’s, programs faced the same fiscal uncertainty that continues to create obstacles for community schools today, Dryfoos explains;

Governors and legislators go in and out of office and programs follow, making uncertain the longevity of state grants as well. In any case, state administrators are eager for old programs to find long-term financing so that the state funds can be moved to initiate new programs. No state has committed the amount of funding necessary to develop and maintain a system of school-based service centers for families and children in every community that needs one. (Dryfoos, 1994, 172)

She highlights twelve states which have built schools with school-based health clinics in 1992-1993 with a total of five hundred and seventy-four, a number that doubled in four years, in New York alone there were one hundred and forty of these programs. She explains that most of these programs receive funding from multiple sources, including, reimbursement from Medicaid, foundations, and state grants.
Within education circles, the community school model is occasionally referred to as “the Cincinnati model” because the board of education in Cincinnati was the first city to legislate that every school should be a community school. The board of education policy decreed that every school should “be a community learning center in which a variety of partners shall offer academic programs, enrichment activities and support to students, families and community members before and after school, as well as during the evenings and on the weekends throughout the calendar year (CLC case study, 2015).” Likewise, it requires that each school have a resource coordinator and follow a OnePlan process of assessing needs and describing partnerships. This model is a bit different from the full-service schools described by Dryfoos that rose in popularity in New York City in the 90s. The resource coordinator manages multiple partnerships, as opposed to a community school director who supervises multiple grants and programs under one agency. Often a director has more power than a coordinator within in a school, because they manage a budget which can provide leverage with their partnering principal.

Multiple federal education policies that have impacted the community school model both directly and indirectly. The last two large pieces of federal education, No Child Left Behind passed in 2002 under President George W. Bush and Race to the Top announced in 2009 under President Barack Obama, have created clear focus on testing. As Michelli writes, “If we draw conclusions about the purpose of education based on the outcomes of the current federal policy that drives state policy, we would conclude that the primary purpose is to prepare students to pass tests (Michelli, 2011).” The impact of this policy has been worrisome, particularly for poor children and children of color (Apple, 2006; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Schools have undergone “curriculum narrowing” (Ravitch, 2010) subjects that are not tested by the state, such as; science,
history, art, health, physical education, languages, music, and theater have atrophied and even disappeared in schools. Increasingly, after-school programs are the sole access to the arts for students in low-income neighborhood. These topics, particularly the arts (Maguire, et. al.,2013), have become the domain of out of school time and outsourced to non-profits. Furthermore, because teacher’s assessments are now contingent on their students’ test performance, there has been a test prep pedagogical focus. While community schools often highlight the statistics showing students who participate in after-school programming have higher rates of day school attendance, after-school programs have also become the one place where students enjoy activities other than math and language arts. While this emphasizes the need for this type of programming within public schools, it leads to questions not only of equity, as Michelli (2011) highlights, but also the purpose of education.

In 2015, Congress passed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), entitled Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and supporters of the community school model feel that many aspects of the bill will support the model (Strauss, 2015). Primarily, this is because it includes language that acknowledges that educational resources are not equitably distributed, allowing room for the idea that some students may need additional and different supports than others. ESSA moves the power to define accountability to the states, granting authority to make decisions on how to work with schools that are identified as “failing.” While ESSA does not do away with high stakes testing, it requires that states consider additional indicators of success, such as student engagement, school climate or safety. ESSA also includes language that speaks to the importance of involving community stakeholders, a concept which is broadly defined as anyone from community based organizations, local government, the juvenile justice system, public housing or any other system that has some interaction with the school.
Furthermore, it encourages partnerships with said stakeholders, with an eye on holistic education, and as many see it, a nod to the concept of the community school. However, as with any new legislation, it is early to get a sense of how this will be enacted, and more importantly funded, particularly under a new administration. If this follows in the footsteps of No Child Left Behind, only $353 million was funded out of the promised 1.6 billion (Strauss, 2015). While educators are hopeful, the impact of this legislation has not yet been observed, nor has funding been secured.

2.5 New York City Community Schools

New York City’s former Mayor, Michael Bloomberg and New York City former Chancellor Joel Klein restructured the school governance away from local authority. They broke up large school buildings by creating hundreds of new small schools, many of them with four to five schools in one building (Hill, 2011). This movement to small schools was motivated by research showing that smaller schools had better academic outcomes and students were more connected to the school (Hill, 2011). With this change, the community based organizations who managed community schools had to make choices about partnerships with schools. Many CBOs attempted to partner with multiple schools, often funding dictated how services were differentiated and CBO’s would find themselves in the middle of complicated school campus politics. While the small school movement and the increased focus on testing were polices aimed at educational quality, they had a significant impact on community schools. Likewise, one of Bloomberg’s key reforms was including more “school choice” for families (O’Day et al, 2011). This meant that many students, particularly middle and high school, would travel a long way to school and because of this distance students and parents are less likely to participate in
the school community during after-school and weekend. This changed the conceptualization of the local neighborhood school as a community hub.

During a town hall at the beginning of his campaign, when asked about his education agenda, Mayor de Blasio discussed the beneficial Cincinnati model and the way it has revolutionized their city’s approach to education. He argued that New York should adopt something similar. A constituent pointed out that community schools exist in New York and have for quite some time. Mayor de Blasio was chastised by his wife for not realizing that the community school model existed here in New York City, and referring to the community school model as the “Cincinnati Model”. However, de Blasio’s interest in the approach has been reflected in his policy and his selection of a deputy mayor, Richard Beury, with experience with the model. When Mayor de Blasio took office in 2014, two of his major education priorities were related to the model and his support for the community school model has grown throughout his tenure.

Within the first year, Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carmen Farina expanded pre-K classes and altered the city’s approach to “failing schools” to what became the “renewal schools” initiative. Mayor de Blasio announced ninety-four schools that would become part of the Renewal Program, targeting schools deemed as failing due to low test scores for the previous three years. As part of this program, principals were partnered with coaches who were experienced principals with successful leadership histories, schools were expected to; provide an additional hour of instructional time, utilize a comprehensive data system and become a community school (Siegal, 2015). In May of 2015, the city distributed benchmarks for improvement for each school. Generally, these benchmarks included specific goals of increased attendance, ELA test scores and quality review results. Part of the complexity of Renewal
Schools is the potential for receivership, which dictates that if a school does not meet its benchmarks, New York State can take control of the schools. This timeline has created a lot of nervousness for community based organizations partnering with renewal schools and those concerned with the overall perception of partnerships within schools. Many in the movement have remarked that renewal schools are creating unrealistic deadlines in which to meet these benchmarks (Wall, 2015) and argue that these schools have higher than average number of students in temporary housing, more students that are to the country, and disabilities. In interviews with leaders in renewal schools, many echoed the same sentiments that were heard in Clapp’s early schools, they felt that it has taken a while for the school’s identity into that of a community school, and that they need more time to evolve and grow through concurrence and consent. Critics maintain that renewal schools we created through top down measures and thus their evolution was fast tracked. As of 2016, the state test results of renewal schools were on par with the rest of the city, which school administrators saw as a sign of progress (Harris, 2016).

In addition to the creation of the Renewal School Program, the Department of Education created a division that focuses on supporting DOE designated community schools. The schools that are guided by this division receive city funding through the Attendance Intervention Dropout Prevention (AIDP) grant which is a partnership with the United Way focusing on chronic absence and preventing dropout and Renewal Schools. In the strategic plan for New York City Community Schools (Department of Education, 2016), the core programs and services are identified as; expanded learning time, early childhood education, health services, mental health, parent and family engagement, community engagement, and adult and family services. Likewise, the necessary structures to provide services are; a dedicated community school director, ongoing needs assessment, defined community partnerships, intentional coordination of
services, strategic data collection and analysis and authentic school-based governance. There is clear designated funding identified for these one hundred and twenty-nine schools, and the city has outlined multiple new funding grants for the creation of new community schools during the third year of program implementation, with a plan to expand to over two hundred schools.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the new community school division of the Department of Education, is that it will leverage multiple resources of the city through its’ policy alignment with multiple city agencies that participate in the children’s cabinet and that are directly managed by city hall (Community Schools Strategic Plan, 2015). Ostensibly, this type of access to resources and power brokers will open opportunities for New York City schools that have been unprecedented in large school systems and identify the growth of the model since the days of Clapp and Dewey.

2.6 Advocacy Groups

The picture to the right was taken at the 2016 Coalition for Community Schools Conference, the post-it notes signify a location where a community school exits as placed by conference participants. While they may be primarily in the north east and the western sector of the United States,
This indicates that this approach has grown in popularity. This is largely due to organizations like the Coalition for Community Schools, which has developed the working definition for this dissertation and are responsible for government advocacy to support this work. This coalition has begun to collect information to determine the number of community schools that exist in the United States, they invite coalition members to complete a community school directory, have 274 school included in their database, however, we know that in New York City alone, the numbers are much higher.

2.7 Cultivating Context

This is an exciting time to discuss and analyze the community school model. New York City has thrust this idea into the forefront with the creation of renewal schools, and no doubt this will be an issue of debate in the upcoming New York City mayoral election (Kirp, 2016). Considering the context of federal and city legislation on the model, this dissertation must consider how issues like co-location, transient community structures, testing pressure in schools, and political funding pressures influence this partnership work. Likewise, how do leaders continue to struggle with helping teachers to redefine expectations for their work within a community school? Because of these many factors, this study considers the role of leadership in managing this complex terrain. Thus, understanding the partnership between CBO and DOE leadership is influenced by factors beyond the two school leaders.
Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

While this study’s guiding question is regarding the values, behaviors, and processes that contribute to or detract from the school and CBO partnership, this chapter begins with the broader questions that motivate the work of education and that should inform the conceptualization of community schools. What is the purpose of education in a community school? Does schooling reinforce or combat inequality? What role, if any, do community schools have in addressing inequality? If one goal of public education is to prepare young people to be active members of democratic society, what type of learning should schools prioritize? This chapter examines some of the fundamental research on schooling and education that informs or influences the community school model. It introduces the ideas of distributed leadership and the relationship between partnership work and school climate. Lastly, it outlines a conceptual framework for this research which is built on Senge’s (2000) five disciplines, and Bourdieu’s (1986) theories of cultural capital. This chapter discusses the interplay of these theories within community schools and sets the stage for this dissertation.

3.2 Schooling, Democracy, and Community

While many historians and educators have debated the reason why we educate, Anderson (1988) simply frames the competing narratives, arguing that “both schooling for democratic citizenship and schooling for second-class citizenship has been the basic tradition of American education.” This dissertation theorizes that the second tradition outweighs the first in our current political, social, and educational climate. This research also ponders the potential of the community school model as an approach to proliferate democratic schooling. As Mason (1967)
writes in *Theory for Urban Education*, education in large cities has been a way to “familiarize youngsters with a main stream of American culture” so they can learn to develop the skills to participate in it. Ultimately, schools should not educate to replicate the class system and acculturate students into the dominant culture, but should invite students to critique and evaluate that culture. Community schools, which serve as a hub for services and cultivate porous boundaries between school and community, are uniquely positioned to do this work of democratic education.

John Dewey (1988) prioritized community and society informing education, but embedded more optimism in his belief that education should be a participatory democracy which prepares students to become active citizens. He posits that education and community are largely inseparable due to the hermeneutic nature of learning. Students are constantly influenced by their environment in both conscious and unconscious ways. If a student feels they are an important member of the community and that their success impacts and informs the community, that child will be engaged and successful. Paulo Freire highlights the importance of an education system and educators who meet the community “where they are at.” He explains,

> We must never merely discourse on the present situation, must never provide the people with programs which have little or nothing to do with their own preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears- programs which at times in fact increase the fears of the oppressed consciousness. It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. (Freire, 2002, p. 96)
Freire warns against a banking style of education, which assumes the students know nothing and the teacher must indoctrinate them into his or her own worldview, as well as create a false neutrality. Much like Dewey, Freire insists that learning should be local and relevant (2002).

Young people do not learn in a vacuum, and learning can happen anywhere. Fine and Weis (2000) reinforce Dewey’s (1916) idea that education takes place not just in schools but at dinner time, in front of the television, on street corners, in religious institutions, and in coffee shops. We cannot pretend that students are only learning through the formal school process. Some critical educators argue that it is the teacher’s role to bring the knowledge they gain through their community education into formal schooling (Gonzalez et. al, 2005). Likewise, to educate the whole child, we cannot ignore their family, peers, and local neighborhood. The community school model reinforces that the school should be a hub of learning not only for the student but for the family and community as well. Therefore, a community school should have the opportunity to blur the lines between school and community, creating a model that is different from traditional concepts of schooling.

Dewey’s (1916) conceptualization of community is expansive and limitless. It can describe a group of playmates, a business club, or a neighborhood, and academically relevant learning occurs in each of these places. While the community can motivate and influence the student, at the same time, understanding the community can help educators gain a deeper knowledge of the student. This vantage point is supported by an ecological perspective used in the field of social work. Germain and Gitterman (2005), like Mason (1967), acknowledge the tendency to focus on the individual (the psychological) rather than understanding the environment (the sociological). Often in schools the individual is assessed or diagnosed without an understanding of the influence of a class, family, or group. This study emphasizes the
interactive nature of environments, and prioritizes holistic group or community intervention over individual assessment. Likewise, it acknowledges the educational potential of building strong connections between community and school to expand learning.

Many educators argue that we have lost Dewey’s vision of democratic education. As Darling-Hammond (1997) points out, our democracy is in trouble:

Only about one-third of our citizens feel sufficiently interested or empowered to participate in a regular way in the political process. Racial, ethnic, and class divisions are growing as confusion about vast social changes creates a search for scapegoats. The ability of citizens to come together for positive social action in their local communities seems undermined by a combination of intergroup antagonism and a sense of cynicism and hopelessness about the usefulness of collective action. Meanwhile, dramatically unequal access to education and employment routinely and systematically disadvantages low income students and students of color and results in growing rates of crime, incarceration, structural unemployment, homelessness and social dysfunction. (p. 44)

She describes a society that is apathetic and unpracticed in critical examination. Perhaps this is another symptom of curriculum developed to prepare students for test taking, as critical thinking is no longer considered to be of educational value. Michelli further clarifies what educating for democracy can be in today’s educational climate. He writes that schools should be:

preparing students to be critical participants in a democratic society. What, however, does the word critical mean in this context? Once again, we go to the idea that students should become capable of thinking critically—of challenging ideas, offering different perspectives, and participating in discussion with others about the positions they hold. It
is important to note here that learning to think critically involves learning to think imaginatively as well. (Michelli, 2011)

With narrow curriculums, testing pressure, constant restructuring, have we lost the idea of critical pedagogy? This is something that will continue to be revisited throughout this study. The entire concept of a multiple-choice test, reinforcing the idea that there is one correct answer, subtly rebukes the concept of a critical lens.

In the United States, the first few months of 2017 has been marked by an increase in civic awareness. There has been a surge of protests since the presidential election of Donald J. Trump in the United States, and this seems to indicate a sharp critique of our current administration. In February (Toure, 2017) hundreds of New York City high school students staged a walkout protesting the nomination of Betsy DeVos for secretary of education, and in January millions of women marched around the world protesting Trump’s anti-women’s rights policy agenda (Hartocollis & Alcindor, 2017). However, for the 2016 election only 58 percent of the electorate voted (Regan, 2016). New York City Chancellor Farina sent a letter to schools encouraging support from guidance and social work staff (Rizzi, 2016) and offering suggestions to maintain an atmosphere of calm and to support students, but this does not indicate a shift in pedagogy. This current political reaction and mobilization is an area for future research, but does not supersede the foundational need for critical democratic education in public schools.

When educators and students invite the community into the school, the school must also be a place to critique and analyze the community and larger social trends. Inspired by what C. Wright Mills (1959) calls the sociological imagination, students and schools must examine the impact of social problems on education. As Anyon eloquently explains,
Urban schools are at the center of the maelstrom of constant crisis which beset low income neighborhoods. Education is an institution whose basic problems are caused by, and whose basic problems reveal, the other crisis in cities; Poverty, joblessness and low wages, lack of health care, housing and transportation, and racial class segregation.

(2014, p. 170)

The problems of the community are inextricably linked to the problems in education. Likewise, national policy that impacts the economy and the family also impacts education. In this examination of the community school model, it is essential to operate from the understanding of inequity in schooling. Furthermore, while the model infuses the school with social services, those services address the symptoms of poverty, but do not solve the root causes of social problems such as wage inequality, lack of affordable housing, unequal access to health care, transportation, and racial and class segregation. While community schools are not a remedy that directly addresses the political economy, they operate with the acknowledgment that schooling and the political economy are inextricably linked.

3.3 School Climate and Trust in Schools

To understand what Bourdieu calls the habitus, or deeply ingrained habits, within a school community, we must examine the school’s climate. Dewey also explains the impact of the social environment on a student. What a student does and what they can do depends on the expectations, demands, approvals, and condemnations of others (Dewey, 1916). While trust is foundational, what else contributes to a healthy school climate? Researchers have found that school leadership is crucial in shaping school climate (Fullen, 2003; Fullen, 2001; Bryck, 2002) and thus, investigating school climate we often learn about both the school and its’ leaders.
Anthony Bryk (2002, 2010) argues that a successful school climate is built on a foundation of trust. He utilizes a term he calls “relational trust”, which speaks specifically to the roles and expectations in a complex ecosystem like a school.

Relational trust views the social exchanges of schooling as organized around a distinct set of role relationships: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents and with their school principal. Each party in a role relationship maintains an understanding of his or her role obligations and holds some expectations about the role obligation of the other. (Bryk, et. al., 2002, p. 20)

Clarity of roles and strength of working relationships are further complicated within community schools, as there are additional members and levels of collaboration. Bryck, influenced by Bourdieu (1986), found that institutions like schools are built on social capital, which is a property of the relational ties among individuals within a social system. Through building trust, productivity increases and the need to monitor decreases. However, how is this trust built? Michelli (2011) reinforces Bryk’s ideas on the centrality of trust and respect in schooling and education when he puts forth the core tenets of educating students for a democratic society. His goals include:

- Treating other students with respect. Of course, it goes without saying that this can only happen when the teacher treats students with respect.

- Listening carefully to other points of view. Careful listening is often a goal in elementary schools, but it is a skill that needs to be developed throughout one’s education. Listening carefully is related to treating others with respect—it suggests that we take what others say seriously.
- Responding to differing points of view with reasoned arguments. Learning to give reasons and support for our positions is an important intellectual skill and central to our role in a democratic society. Giving reasons allows for discussion. We have all heard students, and maybe some adults, respond to a challenge about why they claim some belief by just saying “because.” “Because” is never an adequate response. We need to foster giving reasons and arguing well for our positions in all classrooms.

- Avoiding anger and violence. One outcome of showing respect, listening carefully, and giving reasons for position is a reduction in dealing with differences through anger or even violence. (p.8)

Michelli’s outline speaks largely to the relationships between teacher and students; however, as Bryck (2010) found in his case studies of schools undergoing reform, the relationships between teacher and administration and teacher and parent were equally as important, and generally create a respect trickle-down effect. If teachers and parents are respected and trusted, students are treated similarly. In schools with a healthy climate, both adults and children feel their voice and opinions are heard and there are structures in place to ensure this happens. Just the same way that violence is a learned behavior that can spread, so is listening and holding respectful dialogues. Kerr (1997) calls these “democratic relationships”, which are what form democratic schooling. One of the struggles of this work is that it is difficult to conceptualize or track—it is not measured by tests and it is difficult to legislate. However, trust, respect, and strong relationships are essential for effective schooling (Bryck, 2010; Bryck, 2002).

The National School Climate Center was created to measure and improve the climate for learning in schools, to help students to realize their fullest potential as individuals and engaged
members of society (School Climate Center, 2017). It has developed clear guidelines to support a positive and sustainable school climate. They include the following:

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

3. The school community’s practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice. (National School Climate Council, 2015)

These guidelines highlight the importance of clear structures and practices that prioritize meaningful engagement, reflection, and dialogue. Also, it is important to note the idea of all members or the community feeling safe and supported; in schools, as in all organizations, there
are often hierarchies and striations. However, it is not helpful to hold a lesson on respect or active listening in one class, only for the student to step into another classroom and experience disrespect or find their voice being ignored. Thus, a positive school climate must incorporate all members of the community and buy into this common shared vision. In my experience, often community school staff members serve as an intermediary for the school and community. For example, the social worker or parent coordinator may sit in on meetings with teachers to provide additional support, or provide workshops or classes for parents based on the needs of the community. Likewise, in these guidelines, we continue to see the importance of a clear and shared vision as a tenet of strong partnership as well as a foundation of a strong school climate. For a community school, this begins with the leadership and their understanding of partnership.

3.4 Distributed leadership and Partnership Research

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will utilize the definition of partnership from the National School Board Association, which describes a partnership as consisting of two or more parties that share common goals which cannot be reached by either party independently (Callahan & Martin, 2007). This is what we hope a community school embodies. A public-school partners with a community based organization, and through this partnership the school provides social services, youth development programming, and opportunities for the community that would be scattered and fragmented if offered throughout the community. As with much of this discussion regarding communities, partnerships at their core are based on people, values, and the interactive process between humans and organizations (Barnett et. al., 2010).

What makes a partnership successful? It starts with leadership (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2001). Spillane (2006) describes the essential role of the leader, writing,
Leaders are agents of change—persons whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Leadership thus is defined as a relationship of social influence. (p.19)

Much of the research focuses on leaders’ individual attributes, but this dissertation will focus more on the practices and process of school partnerships within a community school. Thus, interviews will be focused on practices and leadership in action, as well as values or belief systems. Spillane (2001) developed the concept of distributed leadership using a pragmatic approach of examining the practices of successful leaders and their interactive team approach. Distributed leadership acknowledges the interconnected natures of a leader and the community, and is conceptualized as being “stretched over the schools situational and social contexts (Spillane, 2001).

Distributed leadership is often oversimplified as democratic leadership or shared leadership (Spillane, 2005; Harris, 2004), but it is best understood as a practice or process of leadership as opposed to a theory. Distributed leadership generally involves multiple leaders in both formal and informal leadership roles. In education, distributed leadership is often mentioned in association with teaching and curricula teams, peer assessments, and the various committees and collaborations that keep a school running. Similar to the interconnectedness of school and community, distributed leadership lies in the interaction and interdependence between multiple leaders. Embedded in this approach is an empowerment framework, as leadership grows within the ecosystem over time and through collaborative reinforcement and shared accountability. However, critiques of distributed leadership are also being considered in this dissertation. Specifically, Jack Lumby (2013) argues that the idea that leadership will be...
distributed in a gender and racially blind way is perhaps naïve. He reminds his readers that organizations are “fields of power” and, much like education, not politically neutral (Lumby, 2013). Particularly because this dissertation has a paradigm of critical theory, it would be impossible to ignore these factors in an analysis of leadership and power within community schools.

Researchers believe that school leadership is the second most important in-school factor contributing to educational outcomes, with classroom instruction being the primary factor (Leithwood, 2006). Some argue (Leithwood, 2006; Bryk, 2010) that leadership is the single most important factor influencing school turnaround. Most significantly, leadership impacts staff, motivation, commitment, and working conditions, which are crucial components of school climate (Leithwood, 2006; Harris, 2014). In schools with clear leadership structures as well as collaboration and teamwork, staff member success is interdependent and collaboration is incentivized (Harris, 2014).

Genuine collaboration between outside organizations and a public institution such as a school is difficult to achieve. Patterson, Pacheco, and Michelli (1999) identify conditions for a successful partnership. They included mutual trust, honest communication, common goals, flexible governance, positive tensions, and a culture of inquiry. A key piece of flexible governance is equal representation and clear structures, as with distributed leadership. A culture of inquiry is one in which teachers and partner staff “have opportunity to discuss, think about, try it out, and hone new practice.” Again, as with distributed leadership, a web of mutual support creates improvement for the entire school. In a partnership with an outside organization, like a CBO, adding many new people, often with a different background, values, and approach complicates the cultivation of a trusting school climate. The silent bedfellow of this work is
policy, which has significant impact on school climate, community partnerships, and relational trust.

3.5 Conceptual Framework

This review of literature paints a vast landscape of education and attempts to illuminate some of the theories, ideas, and research that influence this researcher’s approach to the purpose and design of this study. It is built on a few key concepts, including:

1- The public school system is built on inequity and inequality, and macro level changes to the political economy are necessary to rectify these issues. However, the community school strategy is an attempt to address some of these larger issues within the school community at a school based or “meso” level.

2- A key purpose of schooling is democratic education.

3- Critical pedagogy is fundamental to democratic education.

4- A school must have a healthy climate to educate students effectively.

5- Leadership is essential to creating and maintaining this school climate.

Guided by these beliefs regarding education and community schools, this study focuses on the leadership of community schools. These concepts are built into the interviews of school leaders and are considered in the analysis of school surveys. This researcher’s experience with the model and the literature reinforces the idea that leadership has a great impact on the effectiveness of a school. Creating a functional partnership has many pitfalls, and so the leadership partnership within community schools must be examined.

This literature review identifies that there must be a distributed leadership practice in place to ensure that there is a genuine partnership between the CBO director and the principal.
Peter Senge (2012) creates multiple layers to this concept, and explains that cultivating a learning organization is the ultimate goal of this partnership work. However, Senge’s ideas and the concept of distributed leadership do not take into consideration power differentials within a school. This work requires consideration of the variance of capital between DOE staff and CBO staff. Because of this, Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of capital is a fundamental component of the conceptual framework.

**Learning Organizations in Community Schools**

Senge (2012) argues that a school that exhibits the habits of a learning organization is going to have improved academic outcomes and a healthier school climate. The five components of a learning organization are personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and systems thinking. The first two components of this model, personal mastery and shared vision, focus on articulating individual and collective aspirations. *Personal mastery* is the ongoing work toward developing a personal vision. This includes each person within a school having a realistic vision of their current abilities and a process to reflect upon the ways in which they can improve. *Shared vision* is a collective process in which people with a common purpose can develop a commitment to the school through developing shared visions of the future and create strategies, principles, and guiding practices to realize this goal. As noted previously in this chapter, a clear vision is a crucial component of a healthy school climate. Mental models and team learning are cultivated through reflective thinking and generative dialogue. *Mental models* are the attitudes and perceptions you have of others in your school that influence the way in which you collaborate. These ideas can hinder partnership—for example “he’s only concerned with test scores” or “he doesn’t understand mental health”—and are only uncovered
and addressed through reflection and dialogue. Mental models also can either reinforce or impede the cultivation of relational trust. *Team learning* focuses on group interaction and is a key component of successful distributed leadership. A team learns through dialogue and discussion which builds on the strengths of each member and in a setting where each person can be honest and straightforward. It is through this dialogue and collective reflection that mental models that impede the work can be addressed and changed.

Systems thinking is a way of understanding this work and the functioning of community schools. When people adopt a *systems thinking* approach to this work, they understand the interdependence of every member of the school and consider the consequences of their actions with this lens. Because of this, they are more likely to collaborate and bring more people into the problem-solving process. This concept of systems thinking is influenced by Ronald Heifitz’s (1994) book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, which explains that leaders face two types of problems; technical and adaptive. Technical problems are easily solved through simple directives, but adaptive problems are more complex and interconnected. Often these are the problems that cannot be solved in a silo and involve many members of the community to engage in behavioral change. Without systems thinking, technical problems will not be resolved. Perhaps key to Senge’s (2012) ideas is that systems thinking must be cultivated by all members of the team but cannot occur if the leader does not model or allow for these systems of reflection to be enacted.

Understanding Senge’s components of a learning organization, we see the complexity of community school partnership and the need for processes and systems for reflection and dialogue. These processes are difficult to cultivate in a school with only NYC DOE staff, much less with the addition of potentially 30 to 40 other people who have a different background,
hierarchy, organizational values, etc. The impact of power dynamics on these systems is inevitable, and we cannot ignore the influence of cultural capital in understanding interactions within schools. Considering the cultural capital and related power dynamics between the community based organization and the Department of Education provides a more nuanced analysis of the school and its systems.

**Community School Capital**

Bourdieu’s ideas on cultural capital, habitus, and power relationships also reflect Anderson’s second purpose of maintaining a second-class citizenship and informs why schools continue to fail. Pierre Bourdieu called cultural assimilation, as Mason describes it, the development of cultural capital in the embodied state. Cultural capital can be anything that leads to increased gains or status, and is built upon and dictated by the dominant culture. It can be style of speech, manner of dress, or education. Through education and exposure, a young person will learn a new way of acting or being which eventually becomes a natural part of their repertoire, or habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). The dominant class enacts symbolic violence by setting the rules and category for this hierarchy while claiming it is neutral (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Dewey (1916) alludes to habitus when he discusses the “unconscious influence of the environment that is so subtle and pervasive that it affects every fiber of character and mind.” In elite schools, this habitus is of a standard of excellence and in working class schools it is one of low expectations. Anyon finds in *Social Class and School Knowledge* (1981) that “working class schools” in low income neighborhoods have teachers who express low expectations both amongst themselves and with the kids. To understand the impact of community on children and their education, this research will consider the in-school and out-of-school factors that are
influencing the habitus of students and how this leads to a culture of success or failure. Often students are not provided with the cultural capital of their own history or with rigorous content, and they are not allowed the space to critique social structures and power dynamics or exert their own autonomy and decision making. Without a critical lens or a dynamic, challenging curriculum, we see what Bourdieu (1974) predicts and Anderson describes (1988): an education system structured to reproduce power relationships, that aims to keep social structures static while occasionally moving up token members to portray the myth of a meritocracy.

Understanding cultural capital within the community school model goes beyond the relationships and knowledge shared among the students—it should also be considered when examining school staff and students, school staff and CBO staff, and students and CBO staff. This researcher has yet to find literature that examines the cultural capital of the staff of the community based organization in schools. This is important to examine because the differentiated capital can impede distributed leadership and influence the cultivation of a cohesive and reflective school that utilizes what Senge (2012) calls a systems thinking approach. My experience with this work has shown me that much of the staff who facilitate programming within community schools tend to be younger than the department of education staff. They are more likely to be from the neighborhood they serve, and many of them have gone to the school in which they work. Also, they tend to be college students, artists, or other professionals as opposed to licensed teachers. Because of their multiple identities and positionality, they are perhaps well positioned to explore sociopolitical identity with students and cultural capital. It is worth considering how these differences impact the school climate and the cultivation of trust within a community school. Likewise, the nonprofit staff members within the school do not have union membership or the protection of tenure. They tend to earn less money, have fewer
benefits, and, in some situations, face a high rate of turnover. Perhaps cultural capital in community schools can be understood through Lamont and Lareau (1988)’s presentation of capital as a means of exclusion. They propose cultural capital as institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 156).

Thus, the question is: does the cultural capital of CBO staff, who tend to be younger, have less formal education, and come from either the neighborhood of the school or one with a similar socio-economic status, influence the partnership? What does an examination of cultural capital in community schools help us to learn about this work? How is it different for students and staff members? Can we partner with young people to examine cultural capital and ignore these dynamics among adults in the building? Overall, these questions regarding cultural capital may influence the analysis of the values, behaviors, and processes of community school leaders.

### 3.6 Summary

This literature outlines the perspectives and theories that influence this research and researcher. The importance of school climate, democratic education, critical pedagogy, and trusting relationships in schools are identified as fundamental to this work. The conceptual framework starts with these understandings about education and identifies Senge’s (2012) approach to creating a learning organization as a roadmap to distributed leadership that coincides nicely with research on school climate and democratic education. Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of cultural capital provides another layer to understand the difficulty of creating an equitable partnership within a community school. It may explain why CBO staff have described the experience of working in a community school as that of a “second class citizen.” This statement
suggests that beyond understanding leadership, there are additional political, social, and cultural structures that are influencing the school climate which will be central to this study.
Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

This study examines the leadership of community schools with an aim to generate theories to improve the model based on a creation of effective systems within the bureaucracy of New York City public schools. The partnership between Community School Directors and principals has not been studied extensively, and is crucial to the success of a community school. This study is a narrative inquiry with a paradigm of critical theory. The data that has been analyzed is interview transcripts and school environment surveys from the New York City Department of Education. The schools targeted for this study have a population that are at or above the city average for the school’s percentage of free or reduced school lunch, emergent bilinguals, and students with individualized educational plans. Each of the schools were classified according the National Center for Community Schools’s continuum of community school governance. The interviews were analyzed by critical discourse analysis and surveys were used for triangulation to gain deeper understanding of the school leadership. The study is being conducted by an insider researcher, who faced a few obstacles when recruiting principal participants. This work aims to be transparent regarding threats to reliability, validity, and generalizability, and to learn from school leaders in community schools. This chapter will explore all aspects of the methodology for this dissertation. These include the rationale for research approach, an exploration of the research setting, explanation of the data sources and how they were identified, the data collection and analysis methods, any issues of trustworthiness that have emerged in the study, and the limitations and delimitations that occurred. This chapter will explicate how the approach to this research was influenced by the paradigm of critical theory.
4.2 Research Approach and Design

This research design follows a mixed methods approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative aspect of this study utilizes the school survey administered to parents, teachers, and students by the New York City Department of Education. This design of the New York City Department of Education survey is built upon Bryk’s (2010) research on trust within schools and research on school climate. The qualitative aspects will include narrative research (Cresswell, 2003) which investigates the lives of individuals and leads to a combined view of the participant’s life and researcher’s life in a collaborative inquiry.

This research will take the form of a narrative inquiry utilizing Susan E. Chase’s (2010) description. She writes, “contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods—all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them.” These interviews will be triangulated with quantitative data from the school surveys utilizing feedback from teachers and parents to create a more comprehensive picture of the influence of leadership on community schools.

4.3 Research Setting/Context

The previous chapter discussed the history of community schools and some of the policy factors that influence this work. This study included ten schools that partnered with three Community Based Organizations (CBOs). These three nonprofit organizations vary in size. Two of the organizations focus on community schooling as a major component of their service delivery model, the third has only one community school. This community school is a charter
and an outlier in this study. I will not discuss the community based organizations in detail to protect the anonymity of research participants and schools involved. The schools within this study are in Manhattan and the Bronx. In total, ten schools participated in this research project, nine of which are public schools with the New York City Department of Education. The schools that participated in this study were at different levels of the community school continuum. The following chart describes each school and how I would characterize their stage of community school development based on interviews. The stages of community school development will be discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School ID</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>% Free/red Lunch</th>
<th>IEP</th>
<th>Emergent Bilinguals</th>
<th>Years of Experience of Principal</th>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>maturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>maturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>exploring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>maturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Excelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Excelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Excelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: School Stats and Stages   Source: Created by author
Since the community schools model has been created to address the opportunity gap existing in low income neighborhoods, families that are new to the country, and students with special needs, this study aims to work with schools that are at or below the citywide average on these indicators. According to the Department of Education website, 78% of students in New York City public schools were at or below poverty level in 2015–2016, thus these schools are all near the city average of family income. Likewise, 13% were classified as English Language Learners citywide. According to the Department of Education, 18% of students in 2015-2016 were identified as having a disability and thus had an individualized education plan. All schools in the study have a higher than average percentage of English Language Learners and students with individualized education plans. Every school in this study has a population with 75% or higher eligible for free or reduced lunch. The statistic of free and reduced price lunch is determined the following way: if the family’s income is at or below 130% of the poverty level, the child is eligible for free meals; if between 130 and 185% of the poverty level, the child is eligible for reduced-price meals; if over 185% of the poverty level, the child is not eligible and must pay full price. The following chart shows the rates for New York State:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Family income equals or is below: Free Meals</th>
<th>Family income is between: Reduced Meals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15,301</td>
<td>15,301-21,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>1,276-1,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>295</td>
<td>295-419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20,709</td>
<td>20,709-29,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,726</td>
<td>1,726-2,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>399</td>
<td>399-567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26,117</td>
<td>26,117-37,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>2,177-3,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>503</td>
<td>503-715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>31,525</td>
<td>31,525-44,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>2,628-3,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>607</td>
<td>607-863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>36,933</td>
<td>36,933-52,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,078</td>
<td>3,078-4,380</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>711</td>
<td>711-1,011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.2: Family Income Free/Reduced Lunch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th></th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>42,341</td>
<td>3,519</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>42,341-60,255</td>
<td>3,519-5,022</td>
<td>815-1,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>47,749</td>
<td>3,980</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>47,749-67,951</td>
<td>3,980-5,663</td>
<td>919-1,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>53,157</td>
<td>4,430</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>53,157-75,647</td>
<td>4,430-6,304</td>
<td>1,023-1,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+5,408</td>
<td>+451</td>
<td>+104</td>
<td>+7,696</td>
<td>+642</td>
<td>+148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 4.4 Research Sample and Data Sources

One of the first steps in this research was to identify which of the schools were in the “exploring” stage— with fewer structures for collaboration in place— or which were at the “excelling” stage—a community school with many processes and protocols to support collaboration. However, as the researcher began to reach out to schools and assess their governance, it became clear that it was difficult to target schools by stage because of the complexity of partnering work and the busy lives of school leaders. Additionally, interviews and examination of survey data showed that fewer of the schools reached the standard of excelling than originally anticipated. The chart outlining the four stages of community school development, which was developed by the National Center for Community Schools, is below.

Photo by Author 2.1 Community Schools Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY COMPONENT</th>
<th>ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>STAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management &amp; Governance</strong></td>
<td>Defining Characteristics</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal as sole manager of the school/programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal management of the partnership, mission and objectives are defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early integration of leadership and management of services-establishing protocols, policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated leadership team; Parents, staff &amp; community seen as key stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize that schools are most effective when their primary role is that of instructional leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Select a lead agency to manage partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop criteria and selection; clarify roles and responsibilities of CBO and the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish operational issues (space, services, team) and revisit needs periodically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize both principal and site coordinator as authorities/leaders in the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site coordinator establishes sufficient trust and credibility to be the authority in the absence of the principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish efficient communication processes and mutually agreed on policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Re: succession, principal or site coordinator can voice criteria to select best candidate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal as the sole manager of the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead agency selected to serve as manager and leader for support services at the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High level of accountability by the CBO to school, parents, and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative leadership of school by both school administration and the CBO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal Structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing school governance structures (i.e. school leadership team, PTA, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish decision-making and communication processes between school and lead agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish formal partnership agreements (MOUs, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular meetings between principal and site coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some sites may establish governance bodies to monitor program quality, impact, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal agreements with the school system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network of staff and/or parents working to improve the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal parent, student, and community leaders who influence the design and delivery of programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal &quot;grapevine&quot; or phone tree to communicate with parents and community around urgent events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The governance and process are established and well-known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong communication between school and CBO staff to assure gains and respond proactively to needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varying degrees (i.e. school leadership team, local school restructuring team, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead agency/school leadership jointly develop a shared vision, strategic plan, service priorities, target groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead agency as an umbrella agency for other service providers in the school, without compromising the integrity and autonomy of the school and other partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consistent integration in both administrative and operational activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CBO serves on the school’s leadership team and is integrated into the school fabric; Principal may serve on governance of CBO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a formal statement of interest by the school district to establish a community school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish formal structures, e.g. MOUs with the school district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have established agreements with all partners, reflecting a deepened commitment with the school district; establish protocols and procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have established agreements that reflect a deepened commitment with the school district to further institutionalize the model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Stages of Community School Development  

The National Center for Community Schools created many versions of the stages of community schools. This study focuses on a draft from 2013 because it has the most detail regarding governance and management that can be used to assess the partnership. In this version of the stages of community school development, each school is assessed on community engagement, partnerships, governance, integration, management and staffing, and family engagement. This version is more grounded in distributed leadership and for each stage outlines the following: defining characteristics, key activities, leadership formal structures, informal structures, integration, and objectives. Specifically, it highlights the importance of the community based organization (CBO) director participating in leadership structures for the entire school as well as established agreements regarding the expectations for the work. The stages in this version are perhaps harder to reach compared to subsequent versions which simply stipulate that the school-
site and community wide governance must be in place and function with one another, that management issues are responded to efficiently, that flow of ideas and concerns is smooth, that there be an up and down governance chain, and that linkage to political systems ensures effectiveness and relevance. Perhaps this change occurred because the qualities of excelling is so difficult to attain.

This chart briefly describes each school and why it was categorized in either the exploring, emerging, maturing, or excelling stage of management and governance in community schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Analysis for Each Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School 1 (maturing)</strong> – This high school is an outlier in this study. It is a charter and in a Manhattan neighborhood different from the other schools in this study. This high school targets students who have been previously disconnected from school, and it has an extremely high number of students who are homeless, chronically absent, and who come to the school from throughout the city. The school opened in 2011 and has changed principals once during that time. The CBO partnership has expanded significantly since the school’s inception and the principal and community school director work closely together. However, the principal directly supervises the CSD. The systems of communication are extremely strong and they have procedures in place to ensure that each student in the building is assessed and receiving services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School 2 (maturing)</strong> – This high school is an alternative high school in the Bronx that follows a portfolio model. While there is an integrated leadership team, due to a somewhat new principal and community school director, communication is not as integral to the day-to-day functioning of the school. However, this school has a long history of creative problem solving with community based partners, and CSD independently runs much of the programming in the school. The CBO runs much of the college preparation work and family engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (exploring) – This is a medium-sized Bronx renewal middle school that is in its second year of partnership. The principal is very experienced and the community school director is new to this work. There are not clear systems in place and the partnership is strained, with little collaboration and coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5 (excelling) – This middle school was built with the community school model in mind and has been established for more than ten years. The principal and community school director are very experienced and have a strong working relationship. This school is part of a campus, with three schools housed in one building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7 (excelling) – This is an elementary school that was built to be a community school and has been established for more than ten years. There are clear leadership structures in place and it is well funded. The principal is new to the school and the Community School Director is very experienced. Clear leadership structures are in place and the principal relies on the CSD’s knowledge of the school and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9 (excelling) – This elementary school has been a community school for more than ten years and has an experienced community school director that is shared with another school. There are clear systems in place for leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Explanation of School Staging  
Source: Created by author

### 4.5 School Site Selection Process

This research design has been approved by the Department of Education and City of New York institutional review board. To protect the participants, each school has been given a
pseudonym and the chart with the identities of each school is kept on a password-protected computer. No students or protected individuals were included in the study, and participants provided consent for participation. Likewise, the findings have been discussed with participants and the data and recommendation chapters will be shared back with interviewees once completed and prior to dissertation deposit or publishing.

As explained above, this research aimed to study schools on contrasting ends of the continuum for community school development. This study initially focused on middle and high schools. However, as this researcher faced obstacles to identifying participants, elementary schools were added to the study. Due to the busy life of community school directors and principals, it was difficult to schedule interviews. Schools were identified by recommendations from the director of the National Center for Community Schools, existing CBO directors and employees, and members of the Department of Education Community Schools Initiative. The study included three schools that are part of the New York City community school initiative to provide a point of comparison between government-sanctioned or mandated partnerships and school-initiated partnerships. Except for two of the schools, the community school director was the initial point of contact and the meeting with the principal was arranged through the director. Some of the community school directors and principals were already known to the researcher, and thus were contacted directly.

4.6 Data Collection Methods

The interviews in this study followed Seidman’s blueprint for phenomenological interviewing. Seidman (1991) describes the purpose of interviewing as follows:
The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to “evaluate” as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (p. 3)

This researcher’s positionality as an insider researcher complicates this work, as there is a natural tendency to test hypotheses based on personal experience in this work. To protect against this tendency, questions were constructed in an open-ended format to ensure space for participants to shape their answers based on their experience and understanding of the work of community schools. Likewise, follow-up questions were used to further probe for understanding. This study also acknowledges what Ralf St. Clair (2005) calls the presence of “superunknowns”, acknowledging the factors that cannot be anticipated in research, as well as the heuristic nature of thought and inquiry.

Interviews with school principals and community school directors were conducted separately whenever possible. The questions were broken up into the three categories of phenomenological interviewing: life history component, detail of experience, and reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 1991). Due to the difficulty of finding time with school leaders, this researcher chose to compress the three-session protocol of phenomenological interviewing into one interview. The first component, focused life history, was concerned with understanding how they became a school leader and the experiences that influenced their idea of what a school leader should be. The second component, the details of experience, examined the processes and behaviors of being a school leader. Lastly, the reflection of meaning aimed at understanding the values, theories, and ideas that influence this work. Likewise, the interviewees are asked to
provide feedback to the interviewer and add anything else they deemed important to the research.

The following interview questions coincide with the research questions for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values, Processes, Behaviors–Life History Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - What experiences influenced your approach as a school leader and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Can you tell me about a decision that was made that highlights how leadership is enacted within the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - How are decisions made by the leaders within the school? Who make decisions within the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - I am interested in the role of mindfulness and self-reflection within leadership. For this research, I consider mindfulness to be a reflection that considers all of the biases, values, explicit and tacit knowledge that contributes to decision making and choice. Do you incorporate self-reflection and mindfulness in your work? If, so in what ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Do you practice mindfulness and self-reflection with your team?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate–Detail of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 - What is the vision for this community school? How was this vision created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - When someone comes to the school for the first time, how do you describe the school community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - What role, if any, do students have in shaping the school’s vision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - What type of professional development is provided for DOE and CBO staff? Are there times where they receive simultaneous or collaborative professional development, if so, what is the content?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes–Detail of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 - What are your priorities for this school and what outcomes do they lead to? What sources of information inform your programming?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social and Political Structures–Detail of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 - How is the school partnership working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - What would you change about the partnership and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - What current DOE policies support the partnership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - What policies detract from the partnership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - How would you describe the differences between CBO and DOE staff, and in what ways are these differences significant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection on the Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 - Is there anything I didn’t ask that you think I should know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Interview Questions Source: Created by author

After performing a pilot study and reflecting with participants about the interview questions, one question about professional development was added to the interview. The idea of promoting inquiry is an important indicator from the National Center’s rubric of excelling leadership. It
also alludes to Senge’s components of a learning organization. The question regarding differences between CBO and DOE staff investigates the cultural capital of the CBO and DOE staff and provides an opportunity to unpack the mental models leaders have toward some of the lower paid, less educated CBO staff. The researcher found there were many spaces for follow-up questions, however, the above two questions were prioritized for formal interviews as part of this study.

The time that passed between interviews determined the length of this study, as it often took a while to hear back from participants after initial contact. Due to the busy schedule of school leaders, interviews were often rescheduled multiple times. Because of this, most principal interviews occurred in the spring or summer of 2016. Generally, the interviewer brought chocolates or small treats to express thanks for taking the time to meet. The interviews generally took 45 minutes to an hour. While there was some variance in follow-up questions from interview to interview, each question outlined above was asked of every participant. Likewise, the interviews were administered and analyzed by only one researcher, so there were no concerns regarding inter-rater reliability.

The school survey includes parent and teacher perspectives, providing an additional data source for triangulation with information from the school leader interviews. The New York City school survey is administered to 6th through 12th grade students, parents, and teachers annually. This survey has evolved from its original conception during Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s tenure. Carmen Farina, school chancellor under Mayor Bill de Blasio, restructured the school grading system, moving from giving schools a letter grade to taking a variety of measures (Taylor, 2014). This school survey looks for rigorous instruction, a supportive environment, collaboration between teachers, effective school leadership, trust, and strong family–community ties. These
six elements are part of what the administration calls the “framework for great schools” and are based on Bryk’s (2010) book, *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. The results for every school are posted on the New York City Department of Education website and are accessible to the public. The questions from the school survey that will be used for this study are identified below and were chosen because of their focus on school leadership and the ways in which they align with the conceptual framework. The questions selected for analysis are as follows, and the parentheses identify who answered the question:

1. At this school, the principal/school leader encourages feedback through regular meetings with parent and teacher leaders (parents and teachers).
2. The principal at this school communicates a clear vision for the school (teacher).
3. The principal in this school promotes family and community involvement (parent).
4. The principal/school leader encourages feedback from parent/guardians and the community (parents).
5. The principal at this school is strongly committed to shared decision making (parent).
6. The principal/school leader at this school works to create a sense of community in the school (parent).
7. How much influence do teachers have over school policies in setting the standards for student behavior (teacher)?
8. Once we start a program, we follow up to ensure it is working (teacher).
9. It is clear how all the programs offered are connected to our school’s instructional vision (teacher).
10. The principal/school leaders know what is going on in my classroom (teacher).
11. Most teachers participate in instructional planning with teams of teachers (teacher).  

(NYC.gov, 2017)

These questions were chosen because they reflect distributed leadership practices through shared decision making, teacher collaboration, and regular meetings with leaders; clarifying a clear vision for the school; inviting families into the school community; and creating a learning organization through awareness and feedback. These ideas dovetail with the concepts outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework.
4.7 Data Analysis Methods

Rymes (2009) discusses the importance of utilizing discourse analysis in classroom observation to transform from differences as deficits to differences as resources. The initial aim of this work was to learn from the strengths of each school and to investigate what was working well. She defines discourse as “language in use” and discourse analysis as how language in use is affected by the context of its use. The paradigm that was utilized for this research, which incorporates critical theory, ensures that discourse analysis will be critical. Rymes (2009) explains that discourse analysis becomes critical when it is driven with a purpose of increasing awareness and participation of all participants of a classroom or community. Gee (2004) elaborates on the process of critical discourse analysis by operationalizing tasks that apply a critical lens. When critical, discourse analysis treats social practices and any word, phrase, or structure in terms of their implications for status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power, and recognizes that they are political.

Likewise, the researcher’s reading of the school environment and leadership practice is informed by Freire and Macedo’s (1921) belief that reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language—rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. In the analysis of interviews of leaders, this researcher attempted to uncover the “figured worlds” (Gee, 2011) of the research participants. Figured worlds are much like Senge’s mental models because they focus on underlying beliefs and thought systems. James Paul Gee’s (2011) figured world tool identifies the typical stories stored in our heads, which are interpretations built by what we consider socially or culturally typical. As part of the motivation to uncover successful practices and processes, we must understand the thinking that encourages leaders to
set up these systems so that future leaders can be molded in the same way. This method of analysis was also chosen because it corresponded nicely with the method of interviewing.

A few other tools of critical discourse analysis that were utilized from Gee’s (2011) *How to do discourse analysis: A toolkit* include the filling in tool, the making strange tool, the intertextuality tool, and the doing not saying tool. The filling in tool and the making strange tool are built upon a simple formula—that what the speaker says plus context equals what the speaker means. Thus, it is the listener’s job to consider body language, previous conversation, and any shared knowledge, including cultural knowledge, to explicate context to create meaning. The filling in tool identifies what is not being said overtly but is assumed between speaker and listener. The making strange tool asks the listener what someone from another planet would find strange, confusing, or worth questioning if the listener did not have shared knowledge or taken-for-granted assumptions. The intertextuality tool isolates when a speaker quotes or alludes to what others have said. For this study, intertextuality was frequently identified when discussing values, theories, or people who have influenced a subject’s approach to the work and created their figured world. Lastly, the doing not saying tool examines actions with the understanding that we may learn more from what people do than what they say. This tool considers how the speaker discusses their actions and the one or many things that they are trying to do. These tools helped illuminate the meaning and themes that emerged from the interviews, but they were not used to understand the survey data. Per Seidman (1991), as a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning through language, and thus a critical discourse analysis approach is well aligned with this method.

The surveys were analyzed by modes and means, and comparisons were made between the different categories of schools that emerged in this study. Specifically, this study looked to
compare schools based on their stage of development, length of partnership, whether the partnership was mandated or requested by the principal, school location, and population, as well as other factors. Likewise, it considered how community schools fared in comparison to the citywide average.

4.8 Issues of Trustworthiness

As Mishler (2010) proposes, the idea of validation within qualitative social science research reflects the trustworthiness of observations, interpretations, and generalizations. Thus, analysis of all discourse is interpretive, and in this vein, this researcher attempts to be transparent about the biases and lens brought to interpretation of this study. Within this study, the researcher aims to reach Maxwell’s (2010) standard of explicating how this researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct of this study. This researcher is an “insider researcher” (Maxwell, 2010), having worked within community schools solely as an employee of a community based organization. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the researcher has been an employee of a community based organization for many years, primarily as a community school director, and may have a unique perspective on community schools. The researcher ensured that community schools from multiple organizations were included. Furthermore, triangulation helped to ensure standards of validity in this study. Interviews of school leaders were triangulated with school surveys of parents and teachers. The initial design of the study included more schools, but recruitment proved difficult. This made the sample less representative of the overall landscape of community schools. During initial outreach, the researcher included schools who partnered with community based organizations other than the
three organizations that ended up being included in the study. However, many school leaders did not respond.

Maxwell (2005) also describes validity as the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, or other sort of account, and a threat as the ways in which the researcher could be wrong. One of the potential threats lies within the bias of the researcher. This researcher attempted transparency regarding her insider researcher status in this study. This researcher’s history working within community based organizations and the disproportionate number of community school directors in the study may have cultivated a vantage point that favored the CBO perspective. Some follow-up questions with interviewees and testing of theories with participants helped to guard against this bias. As previously mentioned, to fortify the validity of these findings, the interviews were triangulated with school surveys to gain further context for the school leaders. Also, member checking by sharing these final recommendations with survey participants will be used prior to the publishing of this study.

4.9 Limitations and Delimitations

A major limitation that arose in this study was that of lack of access and uneven access. It took nearly a year to schedule many of these interviews, each lasting between 45 minutes and a little over an hour. As previously mentioned, the researcher leveraged existing relationships to schedule interviews. The recruitment process was to meet with community school directors and ask them to contact their partner principals. Many seemed hesitant to ask, or said they had difficulty getting a response from their partner. Because of this, out of the ten potential principal interviews, only five occurred. These interviews were conducted over a year’s time, from spring semester 2015 till summer 2016. Likewise, out of eight potential community school director
interviews, seven were completed. Some community school directors managed multiple sites in combined campuses, so there were fewer potential community school director interviews. This lack of access to principals is something that will be considered in my analysis of this research, and may reflect the diminished cultural capital that CBO directors experience within schools.

The researcher’s positionality as an insider researcher may have created an environment which shifted the responses provided by participants. At times, community school directors expressed a “you know how it is” attitude toward certain issues, and some principals seemed hesitant to express concerns about their partners. Likewise, some of the leaders interviewed worked for the same organization, and thus may have censored their opinion of other directors. This will be further discussed in the data analysis chapter.

Joseph Maxwell delineated between internal and external generalizability (Eisenhart, 2009) and this study aims to generalize within the group with a consideration of the influence of institutions. Because the number of schools examined falls below any potential of statistical significance, the aim is to provide ideas for consideration, either for future research or policy, not concrete findings assumed to be applicable to every community school. Because the model is a malleable concept and every community school contains different systems and configurations of services, reaching “nomological generalizations” which explain that absolute truths is not the goal. However, this study does aim to construct theoretical generalizations (Eisenhart, 2009) regarding how to better support and develop leaders and systems in community schools.

Some of the delimitations in this study were regarding a realistic time frame set to complete this work. The researcher was primarily interested in New York City community schools because of the development of New York City community schools and renewal schools. Based on feedback from the proposal committee, the study was designed to compare partnerships
at multiple levels of the continuum, not only focus on schools that were deemed as excelling. However, the aim of this work was to learn from existing processes and systems and generate recommendations to create excelling partnerships. The researcher also found that reaching out to directors and principals based on recommendations, but without a formal introduction from a “connector,” did not yield interviews, so the study was restricted to personal contacts and connections. Undoubtedly, this study would have been strengthened by including another ten schools and obtaining significantly more participation from principals.

4.10 Summary

This chapter explains the research design and approach of this study, which is mixed methods, as well as the research setting of community schools in New York City. It discusses the research sample and data sources, how each school was evaluated on the continuum of community school development, and how sites were selected and identified through the researcher’s existing contacts. Next, the chapter describes the data collection methods: utilizing phenomenological interviewing and identifying trends within the school surveys. This data was analyzed by critical discourse analysis, primarily using tools from Gee (2010). Lastly, this chapter discusses issues of trustworthiness and limitations and delimitations related to access and conditional generalizability. This study aims to influence policy and practice and to provide multiple areas for further investigation.
Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from both interviews with community school directors (CSD’s) and principals and school surveys. The interviews were coded and analyzed with selected tools of Gee’s (2011) critical discourse analysis. The analysis of interviews following this research’s guiding question is organized into a discussion of three categories: values, processes and behaviors. The analysis of the school survey focuses on the parent and teacher feedback to questions regarding school leadership. The exploration of survey data shares charts of key question and identifies trends. The conceptual frame, informed by Bourdieu’s ideas of capital and Senge’s (2012) characteristics of a learning organization guided this researcher’s understanding of this data. This chapter aims to present the data clearly and share initial themes that have emerged from the research.

5.2 VALUES

Prioritizing children

While the aim of this research is to be granular about processes, behaviors and values, the themes that emerged were quite broad. The theme of “prioritizing the needs of children” emerged as the most common value in interviews with principals and community school directors. Participants discussed this as a priority for themselves as leaders and for their partners, they argued if this was clear as an overt value it helped the partnership, particularly independent decision making, it helped them predict how their partner would react and know how to present new ideas and initiatives. One community school director said:
We have one priority and that's kids. Anything that we bring to the table, she's like, "Okay, what are you bringing? Does this make life better for kids or for a particular group of kids?" If the answer is yes, then she pretty much gives you free reign. In that was she also, she doesn't feel the need to micromanage, she's not particularly authoritarian, which one of my principals is.

*Community School Director, School 5*

In this quote, this director explains that her principal asks, “what are you bringing” which shows she identifies the assets her partner brings to the table and is thinking about how to employ these strategically. The director can work with this mindset by keeping the needs of the children central to all discussion. She explained that if she can contextualize the work as driven by the needs of the children in her school, she knows that she will have her principal’s support. Essentially, she found that she could bridge the divide of speaking from either a social service, social work or youth development perspective by connecting her expertise to the values of her principal.

While prioritizing seems like a simplistic value, some community school directors did not find this to be the case for their partners. One director explained of her partner,

He doesn’t want anything to happen that will (distract from) his priorities, make him liable or legally in any way place him at risk and he wants everyone to know that he’s in control and he’s the man in charge, but he doesn’t want to stretch in any way.

*Community School Director, School 5 & 10*

A few directors shared experiences in which the need for control by the principal, usurped other values for a school leader. These directors explained a misalignment of values and actions that manifested into consistent obstacles for the partnership. In the above second quote, this
director compares two of the principals on her campus, one principal has a strong partnership, with clear understanding of how their day to day work relates to the needs of the children and families in their school and because of this opens the school to all possible services, while another expresses concerns about liability and legal risk, often using this as an excuse to intervene in programming. Using the filling in tool (Gee, 2011), what can be inferred here is a different concept or value about what a school should be and how students should be engaged in the school. Ultimately, this director feels that the principal is utilizing liability as a power dynamic, to ensure that his will is met and to maintain control over the school. When the CSD attempts to ground the work by articulating how the services provided will address the needs of students and parents, the principal remains un-persuaded and unlikely to embrace changes or new initiatives. While the principal explains that these changes will leave the school open to liability, the director identifies this decision as a power move, because she provides the same programming and services to another school within the building and the same concerns are not raised. These quotes also show how the lack of clear policy, shared by all partners, cultivates resentment and confusion. Unfortunately, this principal was not willing to be interviewed for this research, and we are left with a one-sided account of the relationship. Nevertheless, grounding the work is a core value of “prioritizing the needs of children and family” remained a theme for both Community Schools and Principals interviewed for this study.

5.3 PROCESSES

Distributed Leadership

As participants discussed their leadership style, a few trends were observed. Utilizing the intertextuality tool, it became clear that those who could identify, name and discuss a
theoretical approach or concrete philosophy were a bit more specific or concrete discussing their leadership practice. Multiple leaders identified distributed leadership as their style, by saying they led by committee or with a management team. Some identified this overtly as distributed or shared leadership, others simply discussed their processes. They did not recognize these process as having been learned formally through education or training. Instead, these were just processes that have been developed from their experience with youth development, supporting the idea that democratic leaders reproduce democratic education. Others discussed how they emulated previous school leaders and mentors. In this vein, both principals and community school directors spoke to the power of having varying expertise on the team. One principal explained how he distributes leadership by making decisions with those who have close proximity to a problem or issue,

It depends on what we’re talking about. If it’s about kids, its usually the teachers and the advisors who make the decisions. If it’s larger stuff, around professional development, or the direction of something in the school, its me in consultation with the Assistant Principals. I try to ask a lot of questions of people, because I don’t think I know it all. I know I don’t know it all. I don’t think I know anything, but it’s really important to me to get people’s input and opinions on things.

Principal, School 2

This principal identifies expertise by closeness to an issue, and sees his role as a facilitator of dialogue, he ‘tries to ask a lot of questions of people, because I don’t think I know it all.” In partnerships that were further along the continuum, the work is fortified by the principal’s willingness to rely on the expertise of others. Interestingly, nearly all of the Community Directors alluded to this team approach as some point in the interview. They were more likely
to discuss a “team approach” and include specificity when sharing examples regarding relying on the expertise of their staff members. One director identified it as essential by saying,

I think having a concept of shared leadership is really important. Being able to accept that you don’t have all the answers or all of the resources or all of the knowledge, that everyone has something to bring, is a feature of shared leadership. You need that type of openness and humility to some degree in order to make a community school work. If you think that you know it all and if you think you are the only one that knows anything, then community school probably isn’t for you.

Community School Director, School 5 & 10

Those leaders who discussed shared or distributed leadership, noted a mindset of democratic leadership. They identified this as openness, as the above community school director does, explaining “it is really important to get people’s opinions on things’ as the above principal suggests. They explained that collaborative decision making was a process they used for themselves as well as with their DOE partners. A few directors connected this collaborative decision making to making better decisions, but also to building leadership within their team. One argued that they felt that the role of CSD lends itself to molding future leaders, one director explains

We’re coaching, we’re modeling, we’re meeting with our teams on a consistent basis. They (principals) don’t have the opportunity to do that, so the work is fundamentally different. I wouldn’t take away from, really, the role of the principal because I think its key as long as the person can step away from the role and look at it from a very different perspective and not just from the lens of “I’m accountable for this. I’m accountable for these scores.”
Community School Director, School 4 & 9

She describes coaching and molding staff through the development of teams and systems as fundamental for her work and she felt her DOE partners were less likely to focus on this because of external pressure to attain certain test scores. She also explains that a team approach was cultivated within her by the training and experience she received from her organization. Utilizing the *doing not saying tool*, we see that the systems in place were not reflecting partnership and collaborative decision making. When principals talked about their “leadership team” they referred to their Assistant Principals, and sometimes the Community School Directors. However, directors generally spoke of their team as the core team members who worked for their CBO. This articulation of “my team” reinforces the finding that community school leaders are often working in silos. Likewise, when probed, it became clear that each leader had different ideas of who held a leadership role on “their team” or were key decision makers.

Another contrast emerged between the language directors and principals used to describe their leadership style. Frequently, principals presented themselves as the ultimate decider, which was often a difficult position. Two newer principals expressed that the role of principal was often a lonely one, and that only those in that position understood the work of being a principal. One elaborated that running an after-school could not nearly compare to running a school, because the stakes were much higher and there was extreme pressure for outcomes. Another explained how he sets the course for the partnership and ultimately sets the barometer for the partnership and expectations,

I’m the kind of guy, I’m going to give you the opportunity. I’m going to give you the chance to get it right, and then I have to reach a point where an ultimatum has to be given that if it didn’t happen by this time, we have to scrap the program.
Principal, School 2

Overall, when discussing their decision-making process, it seems that principals were more likely to follow “the buck stops here” decision making philosophy. This idea that the CBO is in the school at the will and desire of the principal was reinforced in multiple interviews. One Community School Director compared a previous partnering principal with a current partner, explaining the drastic difference in leadership style.

You can have that with an old principal. You can have that with a new principal. If there's not a fundamental understanding of what our role is and the supports that we bring to the schools, then I guess knowing what our role ... that we have a dual partnership where you have dual supervision in many ways, and it's a shared leadership as opposed to, "I'm the leader of the school and you do things my way. You work for me." Versus now we have a dual leadership and there are many things that you bring to the table, that we bring to the table that, together, we can address the needs of the children if it's done in the way that it needs to be done.

Community School Director, School 5 & 10

In this quote, she identifies two important themes that emerged in these leadership interviews. Principal leadership styles can make or break the partnership, and many principals, much like the principal above see themselves as the only true leader in the school and thus, have difficulty distributing leadership. This concept of one true leader is reinforced by DOE policy which holds the principal responsible if anything goes wrong in the building. Likewise, there continues to be confusion regarding the role of community school director and the power relationship between principal and director.
Leadership Structures and Processes

All of the principals interviewed expressed that they relied heavily on their cabinet team to make decisions for and with their school. From this examination of the use of the cabinet, a discrepancy emerged. The community school director was on the cabinet for only four out of ten schools. However, the participants identified this as an important decision making body for the school. One community school director spoke about cabinet meetings and their value, she said,

I’m a member of the cabinet, the school cabinet. We meet on a bi-weekly basis to talk about the instruction, to talk about community events, to talk about things that are impacting the learning in our school. As a team member, as a part of the cabinet, we make decisions together.

Community School Director, School 7

This structure in which the primary decision makers came together to discuss school wide decisions hold value for all participants of the study. Another director discussed his exclusion from this process, which he identified as a disconnect from management.

He (the principal) has a cabinet which consists of the 3 Aps, assistant principals and himself. I haven’t really been included in those cabinet meetings. I’ve been told by one of the administrators that they really deal with a lot of academic stuff.

Community School Director, School 3

This idea of domains within the school and who is responsible for managing them also varied between schools, in this case the director claimed “academic stuff” was not considered the domain of the community school, although academic work and tutoring is being done by CBO staff members, some of whom are college students or licensed teachers. Interestingly, there was
not a consensus amongst the community school directors that they should be a part of cabinet meetings. This further reinforces the emerging theme of confusion regarding the role of community school director, by both principals and community school directors. Seemingly the understanding of this role varied between directors amongst themselves, as there were some who weighed in on major academic issues within the school and others who did not see it as their place, and between directors and principals. This role confusion will be discussed later in this chapter. Of the principals interviewed, only one identified the Community School Director as a key member of the cabinet. Specifically, when explaining how he incorporates mindfulness into his leadership style, he said

The people closes to me are my, I have two assistant principals and a community school director. That is my immediate team. That’s the cabinet of this building. We all have very strong trust and an open line of communication with each other.

Principal, School 8

Thus, his cabinet was supportive in making decisions but also managing the stress and difficulty of managing a school. This principal spoke very highly of the partnership and how he relied on each member of the cabinet to bring their own unique expertise to managing the school. Other principals, did not include Community School Directors as part of their cabinet, however, identified their team of cabinet members as the most important decision making body within the school.

Multiple directors expressed frustration at a lack of clear and coherent structures for communication with their principals, and those with clear structures expressed that access and time often seemed to manifest into a power struggle between partners. One director explained the dance she does with her principal when waiting for time to meet with her,
Only because we’re juggling our own calendars and sometimes I feel like a little begging dog. You’re waiting.” Can I now? Can I now? 10 minutes? Okay, I’ll wait here.” Well, now it just took thirty minutes away from things that I could be doing because I’m worried that if I leave my desk, I am going to miss and opportunity to speak to you and I really need this information. That’s where it becomes a little bit sometimes…I don’t think people value everyone’s time. I get that everyone’s busy, but I feel its important to be present, to say, “Okay, I said I would give you this time, so let’s do it.”

Community School Director, School 4 & 9

She often feels as if she is “on call” and needing to drop everything to get five minutes with her principal, even when she is facing her own deadlines and priorities. Another director expressed the same feeling of a lack of respect for her time, especially when she comes in early or misses a meeting with her agency for a school meeting that is cancelled or postponed.

We’re pulled for many different things, so many times I’ve missed many meetings that have gone on because competing priorities. WE need to do this. I have missed so many meetings, that oh’ we postponed or we held that meeting at 7 in the morning. Well I’m not here at 7 in the morning, so next time keep me in mind.

Community School Director, School 7

The theme of directors feeling like they must advocate to be remembered is highlighted in this quote, “so next time keep me in mind” and reflects how the partnership work often seems to be an after-thought. Often this issue of competing schedules, where DOE staff generally work from 8AM till 3PM and CBO staff tend to have a 10AM to 6PM schedule often compounded communication issues. However, the idea of CBO partners not being considered within planning processes or that the director’s time was not valued was one that came up in an
examination of the partnership. For a few, keeping a standing meeting or maintaining a schedule with their partner was a goal that was not always met. Whereas for those schools that were excelling there were structures in place to ensure consistent communication, which is something that will be continue to be explored throughout this dissertation.

**Mindfulness in Leadership**

Every school leader discussed the importance of mindfulness and reflection in their work. The majority of participants spoke about individual reflection during a quiet moment or with a colleague or friend. One principal explained his internal process,

I'm a very reflective person, so I spend time on my drive home thinking about the work and reflecting on where we could do better. I need more balance in my life. I used to run a lot more, and I was an avid runner, and I need to pick that up again.

Principal, School 3

For him, mindfulness was about taking time to himself and cultivating work-life balance. However, analysis of this leader’s interview revealed that he tended to rely on the use of “I”, and while he spoke about teams, he seldom used the word “we.” This same principal, tied his leadership approach to mindfulness

At the end of the day, mindfulness, you have to be present. You have to be in the moment and make the decision. You can't worry about yesterday. You can't worry about tomorrow, and you can't be indecisive. That's a key factor. You can't be indecisive in this business because if you're indecisive, you'd be squashed like a squirrel on the road, just not knowing whether to go right or left. It's about making a lot of decisions and making them in a timely fashion.
Principal, School 3

This principal understood mindfulness as generating a decision through reflection and sticking with that decision. This contrasted quite a bit to other leaders who immediately connected mindfulness to distributed leadership. One director mentioned how much working with the cabinet has helped her to reflect and grow professionally,

I talk to them about things like, this didn’t go well, why? Or like, what advice can you give me in how I can improve upon this? They’re great because they are very receptive to things that I have to say and they give me advice, and they have their own experiences. They’ve been working in the school system for a really long time so they’re able to offer me advice from a different perspective.

Community School Director, School 8

However, participants shared that often processes for reflection, much like leadership structures, exist in silos. Community School Directors engage with their site based staff or with other directors and principals reflect with their assistant principals or principals from other schools. Fewer discussed how they build reflection into their existing processes and meetings. However, one described mindfulness and team reflection as integral to her role, she explained,

It's like we do a lot of reflective practice, exercises, we do a core meeting. We have multiple meetings that are kind of internal, monthly meeting with all of the CAS partners, local clinics and all that, and then we have bi-weekly, core meetings which is my 5 full timers…. For me part of the mindfulness is or as an exercise, but also as a general practice I think is creating space, safe space for staff to kind of address those contradictions together so that people don't feel isolated and feel like they can address or raise their concerns in a way that's constructive and where they can be supported and
where we can strategize around how to kind of work either through, around, or with the challenge.

Community School Director, School 5 & 10

Primarily, this director explained that she built some type of mindfulness practice into whatever work space she could control, meetings she facilitated. She explained that work within the school was often so stressful and crisis driven, a big part of her work was helping herself and her team to slow down and relax their thinking. Directors expressed a need for a reflection process with principals, however few felt that reflection was a core aspect of their partnership. Those leaders who had excelling partnerships, seemed the most open to reflection with their team.

5.4 BEHAVIORS

Collaborative Vision

The key research on school climate identifies having a clear vision as an indicator of a healthy school climate (Senge, 2012, National School Climate Center, 2017). Likewise, as part of the renewal school process, schools were charged by the Department of Education to create a school vision collaboratively with the school community. Each school engaged in this process differently. One school brought the DOE and CBO staff together and held workshops, led by the principal, to discuss fundamental aspects of the vision. Another school created focus groups to elicit feedback to contribute to the vision, and another school’s vision was created by the principal during a transition into a community school under the renewal school program. In community schools with a longer history of partnership, school leaders admitted that the school vision was created and maintained primarily by the principal, or did not have a sense of how
that vision was created. There was not a collaborative visioning process that occurred once these schools became a community school and thus the evolution to a new way of thinking was incremental and fragmented. One community school director explained,

I think the principals they have their own vision and mission and they expect us to buy into their vision. What ends up happening is that you look at our agency’s vision and our mission and you see how it ties in and what you’re again, you’re being a servant leader. You’re being the one whose looking at the whole picture and you’re saying oh great your outcome is to do x, y, z.

Community School Director, School 4 & 9

On many occasions, Community School Directors expressed being the intermediary between their agency and the school, which both have their own mission and vision, and working to ensure that both are aligned. This Community School Director spoke specifically to the idea of being a servant leader, she sees herself as serving the students and families but also serving the requirement of the principal and school administration, as well as those requirements set by her agency.

**Hierarchy and Leadership Roles**

One issue that confuses leadership in community schools is lack of coherent structures or understanding of hierarchy. With the exception of the one charter school in this study, the CBOs were funded and staffed completely separately than the public school in which they were housed. Directors are supervised by deputy directors and the vice principal of the division within the CBO. The hierarchy of the CBO is clear and the school, both systems have a clear organization chart. However, it is less clear how the two interact. One principal expressed
some clouding and confusion of the staffing hierarchy for Community School Directors. He posed it as more of a philosophical as opposed to a practice dilemma,

Another thing that is a little weird, again not an issue I have here, but she (the CSD) is in a place where who is her supervisor? Is Lucy (names have been changed) from the CBO her supervisor? Or am I her supervisor? Are we going to get to the point where I say do something and Lucy says do something contrary? Then what? She is caught in the middle of that. That is also a strange policy to me.

Principal, School 8

This lack of clarity in hierarchy and roles emerged as a consistent theme, particularly in renewal schools. One principal expressed some remorse in the way that he introduced the DOE and CBO partnership. He felt that he did not give the appropriate weight to the work that is done. What emerged is that different expectations were set forth regarding the role and expectations for Community School Directors. Some participants presented this role as akin to the Assistant Principal, and those schools that presented this analogy were the ones that had the CSD sit in the cabinet.

I didn’t know what a community school director really was going to do. I sort of was coached like it would be somebody you can look towards like an AP so I ran with that.

Principal, School 8

For new community schools, a lack of template for this role served as a problem, and this impacted not only the leadership, but the school as a whole. This idea of CSD as a similar role to assistant principal had been promoted in articles about the model (Wall, 2016), however, directors manage their own budget, manage their own employees and multiple contracts. This analogy, CSD as an assistant principal, has created a practice debate. Because many directors
see their role as administrative in a way that is more similar to a principal or director of a small organization, as opposed to an assistant principal.

This is a full service school which is important, it's an important distinction because the volume of administrative ... Essentially I manage a budget and a matrix of programs that parallels a small non-profit organization. I think administrative experience and training is necessary and I have not just here, but I have friends be community school directors of other organizations that have actually quit because they didn't have the administrative infrastructure, support, or experience.

Community School Director, School 5 & 10

Another complicating factor of role definition is that each community school is structured differently. As this director explains, here is a “full service school” which means it includes a health clinic and mental health clinic, and additional management responsibility and expertise. Meanwhile, directors of smaller schools were asking for the label of assistant principal, to create a blueprint for the school building to understand their work with Department of Education terminology.

One director explained,

I think community school director is something that's new for a lot of people. So when you have a new title, it's like, "What exactly are you supposed to be doing?" I'm not saying it should be that title, but something that they're more familiar with like if you have AP of Community Affairs. I think even if they don't work for DOE, but you work for, something like AP, that they're familiar with. I think something as simple as that, I think that could really change dynamics of the school. When you're introducing a new
role that's something that's new to people, it's going to create it's only set of tasks. I feel like even something as simple as that.

Community School Director, School 8

This director felt her job is similar to an assistant principal and that members of her school community generally found her role confusing. In this school, both the director and principal expressed that teachers expressed concern and showed some resistance to having a new person in a management position without a clear understanding of their relationship. Likewise, this highlights that the role of csd is very different depending on the size and services provided to the school.

Because of the lack of role clarity, power conflicts emerged in some schools. One principal explained that teachers had difficulty accepting that the community school director may have some authority in the school,

I think getting with the teachers is the hardest part. Teachers are stubborn and they have a hard time understanding somebody’s an administrator but they’re not evaluating you, but they have an important role. That’s my own…..I reflect on that stuff all the time.

Principal, School 8

This principal, who is new to the role, seems to reflect his frustration with the transition, and the teacher’s resistance to changing from a traditional school to a community school. This tension existed in the renewal schools. One Community School Director expressed some nervousness around stepping on the toes of teachers and other school leaders, especially as she was increasingly given responsibility within the school.

As we started to strengthen our relationship, he started to give me responsibilities, more tasks, and that can seem, for some people, it can be a little off putting. Is she taking away
my responsibility? Is she coming in and trying to take over? I am not 100% sure what her role is exactly. What is she doing this? Are we not doing a good job? That can be a little jarring for some people.

Community School Director, School 8

This difficulty with transition was more prominent within newer partnerships, however, this idea of competition between DOE and CBO staff was something that emerged in multiple schools. The role of the teacher’s union further complicates this issue. One director shared an experience within another school where CBO counselors and teachers were asked to leave the school because they were seen as a threat to union jobs. Increasingly, we have seen that non-testing subjects, like the arts, have become the domain of after-school programs and part time staff in lower income neighborhood schools, as opposed to full time teachers. This undercurrent must be considered within a critical sociopolitical analysis of this work, and will be discussed further in final chapter.

The role conflict and questions indicated that the CBO was becoming enmeshed in the school, as opposed to working in silos. Another principal conceptualized the CBO as a completely separate entity.

We have 25 CBO employees that work in this building every single day. It is sometimes a little bit who are you and what are you…what part are you working on? I wouldn’t actually change that because I actually think it is very powerful.

Principal, School 2

Utilizing the filling in tool (Gee, 2011), this quote alludes to some of the difficulties that principal’s face in a community school. Often, in order for the partnership to be successful, the principal must relinquish some control to the director and change systems to create space for
new team members. Ultimately, this principal expressed faith in the CBO and CSD to enact the vision of their school without knowing every detail. He further elaborates a bit on this tension, and the ways in which being the principal of a community school is unique.

For a principal of a community school, I guess the challenge is to have your foot in both arenas. You’ve got to be able to run your school but also understand the community school model and meet the needs of the community school, meet the needs of your school. That’s the challenge. You have to have patience. It’s good to be clear to set what your expectations are.

Principal, School 2

For this principal, as well as the others interviewed, this idea of setting clear expectations surfaced in every interview. It reflects the ongoing theme of the principal as the true leader of the school. This indicates a lack of clarity for community schools within DOE policy, which reinforce the idea that if anything goes wrong in the school building, the principal is culpable. Likewise, all outcomes are utilized to assess the principal’s performance regardless of who is driving an intervention within the school. For example, in renewal schools, CBO’s are seen as being responsible for attendance outcomes and have many initiatives to address chronic absence, yet it is part of the principal’s evaluation. The evaluation processes for school leaders are done completely separately, one by the DOE and the other by the CBO, with no opportunity for partners to weigh in on one another’s performance. The question of who is responsible for what, remained as an underlying theme in these interviews. Academic and attendance data are increasingly used to assess the work of the partnering organization, some directors lamented that they felt their control over these outcomes were limited. They felt that their success was contingent upon the strength of the partnership with the principal, because they were not often
weighing in on critical issues related to academics, attendance and other school-wide outcomes.

**Equity Issues**

Dissecting the differences between the principal and community school director, as well a community based organizations and the Department of Education, issues of equity emerge. Generally, the directors that were interviewed for this study had five to fifteen year of management experience and managed programs with a budget of between $500k to $1.5 million dollars. Department of Education schools have a fair funding formula (DOE website), while complex, has a school of four hundred and ninety-two students funded at nearly $3.5 million dollars. Thus, the schools within this study have budgets of approximately $2 million to $3.5 million dollars. Likewise, the principals in this study had anywhere from one to fifteen years of experience as a school principal, however likely had leadership experience prior to taking the role of principal. One of the more experienced directors expressed an equity concern around expectations and compensation,

One of the things that I would like you to bring to the forefront is that community school directors are expected to be the partners and thinking partners of the principal, but it’s not equitable. We are not compensated the same way they are, but are expected to do the same type of delivery in regards to leadership and expectations, so that’s something that needs to be talked about.

Community School Director, School 4 & 9

This quote reflects a few issues within the partnership. Firstly, as referenced above, often principals consider a CSD to be at the same level of assistant principal, yet are generally not on the same pay scale as assistant principals. Whereas, many of the more seasoned community
school director see themselves as more as an independent entity or at a similar level as the principal. One director pointed out that her budget is similar to that of a small non-profit and others referenced that the number of staff members they manage is similar to that of many small schools. Generally, all training, coaching, and guidance of CBO staff is managed separately and are under the auspices of the CSD. However, as the above quote highlights, most community school directors make on average 85,000 per year (Wall, 2015) whereas the average New York City assistant principal makes approximately 105,000 per year (glassdoor.com, 2017). Likewise, they do not have the union protection or benefits that DOE staff members receive.

**Cultural Capital**

There are also discrepancies in what Bourdieu (1986) identifies as cultural capital between CBO staff and DOE staff. Generally, the level of education of DOE staff is different, one CSD highlights this,

DOE staff differ from CBO staff. DOE staff, one of the major differences is that…except for the para professionals, they’re all master’s level folks. In our CBO, except for the administrative team, and not even, because some of us are bachelor’s level, so we have bachelor’s and master’s level. The majority of our staff are students, but the expectation is that they deliver outcomes the same, so that’s a huge one.

Community School Director, School 7

Multiple directors felt that because they were viewed as less formally educated and not within the union, at times they were not treated in the same manner as the department of education staff. In exploring these educational differences, she expresses frustration that as directors they
are often working with younger professionals with less education but argues that expectations to influence test scores are similar or the same. Likewise, at times they expressed being viewed as less professional because staff do not have the same formal education.

**Staff Diversity and Demographics**

Generally, the ethnic and racial demographics of CBO staff are more likely to mirror the school community. However, there is no published data regarding the ethnic or racial profiles of CBO staff in New York city community schools. Thus, this is largely anecdotal. One community director explains that CBO staff is much more diverse,

It’s African American, it’s Latino, it’s White, and we’re diverse versus what’s happening in the Department of Ed.

Community School Director, School 2

This sentiment of lack of diversity in the department of education was echoed in most schools,

In general, the faculty is white. I mean, the majority of our faculty is white. They (the students) are of color.

Community School Director, School 5 & 10

At times, the Community School Directors expressed frustration at the lack of diversity and the unwillingness or inability of staff members to address diversity related topics.

Quite frankly there are not black males and females here to really teach this (about race and racism) you know I think that’s a definite problem. It’s something that we want to do, and I think that that’s something that we are really training our eyes to in terms of cultural competency and really about how we as the CBO are….we are the only people of color.

Community School Director, School 2
In discussing his concerns regarding the lack of diversity, the principal from the same school expresses similar frustration with the lack of diversity.

This school started as a social justice school. I think there are lots of racial implications here in the school with a student body of 60 percent Hispanic, 40 percent African American. A majority of a white teaching staff. A lot of support staff here is not Caucasian. There are a lot of race implications that I’m not sure are always addressed or spoken about. They’re the unwritten rules. I wish our teaching staff had more people of color on it. We actively did lots of work around trying to make that happen and were not incredibly successful, for whatever reason. We’ve lost a couple teachers of color the last couple of years and have not replaced them with other teachers of color. Race gets talked about and discussed, but I think that’s an issue that we don’t always do a great job of talking about or figuring out.

Principal, School 2

What seems implicit in this statement, in the “unwritten rules” are that support staff and CBO staff are the staff of color, not teaching staff. This begs the question if CBO staff are viewed differently because they disproportionally represent historically marginalized groups of people. Overall, all leaders expressed that their school was not likely to overtly discuss the racial and ethnic difference that exist within the school. These differences exist between CBO staff and DOE staff, but also between the students and the DOE staff. The community school leaders interviewed explained they seldom created space to discuss political events that related to racial and ethnic difference within the larger community.
Addressing Racism and Difference

When asked about the school’s ability to address race and class whether there is a propensity to explore racial conflict within the local community or nationally, most school leaders explained that they did not feel that their schools addressed these issues in a comprehensive way. The theme of teachers being unprepared for these dialogues emerged in multiple interviews. One CSD said,

Obviously, the last year there has been a lot of civil unrest, there has been a lot of racial tension and I think that the school has had trouble addressing those issues. I think that older white teachers sometimes are very uncomfortable with speaking about these things to students I think…I guess with the not wanting to drive wedges between themselves and having these types of political discussions. I think its along the lines of how you should never talk about culture and politics at a wedding.

Community School Director, School 2

Utilizing the making strange tool (Gee, 2011), one gets the sense that there is very little cohesive understanding of what is being addressed in the school, and there is some division or fragmentation either on racial lines, or between the CBO and school faculty. Many school leaders grappled with the question of whether race should be addressed in schools and others with how to prepare teachers to address these issues. While other school leaders felt strongly that race and class should be discussed in class they didn’t feel their teachers know how to broach these difficult topics, one principal said,

I think issues of race we have to teach about. I think people are scared to speak about it.

Principal, School 8

Another principal noted the fear of “opening up pandora’s box”, so those teachers that are
comfortable and have social justice framework create space for dialogue within their classes, however,

“folks aren’t necessarily comfortable as it is.”

Principal, School 6

As this topic was introduced to the interviewees, there was some distancing language. For example, using terms like “I guess” and “I think” where used when previously respondents had been more confidant or definitive. There was a nervousness to specify who was struggling with addressing these topics, using broad language, such as “folks” or “people.” Another question that emerged, was who is responsible for preparing teacher for this work. Principals seemed unwilling to take on this controversial work, and did not seem to believe it was their responsibility. One suggested employing this researcher to work with his teachers! Likewise, none of the principals’ identified their CBO partner as a resource for addressing this work or even as a thought partner for generating solutions. On the other hand, one or two directors expressed the desire to take the issue on or saw themselves or their staff as more prepared to handle this content.

However, most directors spoke about how they eased racial tensions within the school community by cultivating relationships or creating spaces for student or family voices to be heard. One said,

Our African American families have not always felt welcomed at PS X. They felt like “oh, the people over there, they only take care of the Latinos and I’m not light enough for them to take care of me.” There’s always been that and figuring out a way to be inclusive. Now, in after-school, we don’t have a problem. Families have no problem speaking to us where there was an issues. They straight out told us, “no but you can listen to me miss, blah,
Directors identify the CBO’s role as a bridge for the school and the community, seeing their programming as a safe space for groups that historically experience conflict or oppression. A few of the directors interviewed discussed addressing difference around the use of language in the school. One director explained that some students alienated those students who were new to the country,

_It’s more of like “I am frustrated because they don’t speak the language” versus they don’t want to interact. They don’t want to work with them, or bully (them) because of that reason._

_Community School Director, School 8_

She explains that interventions to address this type of bullying is generally done in individual conversations or small group dialogues. However, while community schools were addressing intolerance within the school and creating space for families and community members to feel welcomed in the school, they did not seem to have a specific plan with a social justice foundation to reflect upon the pervasive structures of racism, sexism, classism and how these systems reinforce inequality.

**Professional Development**

One of the indicators of an excelling community school, is collaborative professional development, however many leaders explained it was often difficult to carve out time during which both DOE and CBO staff could participate in training. However, a few directors explained that they often were able to share information with teachers during their professional development time and this helped to strengthen communication with the school. These trainings
and staff updates tended to be more transactional then transformational. Only one school said that they held professional development with both DOE and CBO community school staff. This school contracted an outside agency to train everyone from teaching staff to custodial. This school may be an outlier because it is a charter that is run by the CBO, which lends itself to group cohesion because all employees are under the umbrella of the same agency. One school held a specialized professional development for faculty to reflect on the killing of black men at the hands of police and how it impacted them as teachers and the school community but struggled bringing these crucial conversations into the classroom,

We came back for school and we had a retreat, we spent like a 2 hour (restorative) circle with the whole staff discussing what the whole racial implications of Ferguson and teaching is. It was wonderful, it was great, but when the hell do we have two hours to sit around and talk about things that are incredibly important, but don’t necessarily connect to our goal of teaching a learning? It is but, there is only so much time in the day to discuss all the things that are important.

Principal, School 2

This idea of finding time for reflection was difficult for many principals, and many struggled with this disconnect between how these larger oppressive structures connect to pedagogy. Likewise, a few principals expressed difficulty in how to support their staff in addressing their own biases and motivation,

What are our biases and our stereotypes? How hard are we willing to work? How far do we really believe these kids can go? How far do we really believe we can take this community? There’s a lot of things that a person should think about that I think about on a daily basis when working here, but if you’re putting your kids first you’re thinking about
those things. That should be the reward in this work. That’s the reward for me.

Principal, School 8

Utilizing the filling in tool, this principal, as well as others are alluding to a frustration of low expectations for students that emerges in low income school and neighborhood. They question their teachers own opinions and ideas and are not sure how to help these teachers to overcome their own stereotypes and biases. One principal explained that many teachers approach this work with a charity framework that does not serve the teachers or the students.

Folks have great intentions. I want to come in to hear, and I just really want to help students, especially students who are most in need. That is great, but the way you help them is past just having a great heart and wanting good for them. You do it by being a professional and helping those students. It’s not the sympathy piece. Its not doing things for them. It’s giving students the tools to be out there and fend for themselves in the world.

Principal, School 6

This principal alludes to the “othering” of students that frequently happens within schools, particularly with white staff and students of color. This “charity mentality” is discussed in Chris Emdim’s book, For white folks to teach in the hood....and the rest of y’all too, he discusses his experiences as a new black male teacher with a white female colleague,

I had been trained my entire life to believe that being something other than who I truly was would make me a better person. She had been trained to be herself and help the “less fortunate.” Though our motivations and experiences were different, in the course of our conversations we learned that we had one thing in common: the constant reminder by peers, family members, teachers and now school administrators to see urban youth of color as a group that is potentially dangerous and needs to be saved from themselves. (p.22)
Principals and directors were aware of this mindset and expressed concern about how it impacts the school and students, seemingly uncertain of how to address it in a structural or comprehensive way. Nearly all principals expressed their honest frustration regarding supporting and advancing the work of their teachers, specifically in cultivated a culturally responsive practice, again it seemed that the role of the CBO was not considered as they evaluated the pedagogy in their schools.

**Youth Leadership**

While discussing the behaviors that exemplify their approach to leadership, many shared times where they changed their mind based on feedback from students or staff. They discussed changing the policy on uniforms based on student protest and changing the use of binders instead of notebooks based on a strong push from the cabinet. Interestingly, while both principals and community school directors spoke about the importance of youth voice, most of their systems for eliciting youth feedback were informal or sporadic. A few schools explained that they were creating structures to form a school government with a clearer feedback loop. Directors spoke about creating a safe space for students to submit their concerns and complaints,

One of the things that I reflected on was that I feel like students aren’t really able to express their voice in a more formal way. I feel like that was lacking, and that was really important for me to look at what we could do to change that. – Some kids are always going to make comments, “I hate school.” And say something like that, and its fine.

Principal, School 6
Again creating a clear structure seemed to be a future focus as opposed to an existing structure.

Outcomes

Interestingly, there was no consensus regarding the outcomes that CBO’s are responsible for within Community Schools. However, frequently, directors discussed seeing attendance and social emotional learning as their domain. These priorities were in the forefront within renewal schools, which has been very overt about setting benchmarks and ensuring that CBOs take some ownership of this work. The tension regarding academic outcomes emerged as a frustration for Community School Directors who felt they were being held accountable for state test score results but have very little influence on the teachers and pedagogy within the day school. The lack of clarity of outcomes are tied to role confusion and noncollaborative assessment processes.

Renewal School Process

As discussed in chapter 2, renewal schools are schools that have been mandated by New York State to become community schools as part of a turnaround strategy for failing schools. Three out of ten schools who participated in the study were renewal schools. The context of new mandated partnership was ripe for reflection. This researcher asked the school leaders to share their thoughts about the process. Many of the principals expressed doubt regarding the long-term direction of this intervention. Two explained the process with very similar construction metaphors,

They built the pylons for the bridge, but they never built the road across the bridge, so you thought it was a bridge, and you driving on it, and there’s no road, which is a typical way
things get done.

Principal, School 3

Another principal explained that the lack of clarity provided by the department of education, made him more likely to rely on his CBO partner to help clarify how to create a successful community school.

Nobody knows exactly how this is going to work out. The DOE doesn’t know how its going to work out. They’re kind of building the tracks while the train is coming, but at least this organization has done this work.

Principal, School 8

Some leaders felt that the renewal process led to an unhelpful micromanaging of principals, and often both directors and school administration were in so many meetings that it hindered the collaborative work. They were also acutely aware that his was a highly politicized strategy, and felt the pressure put on the school often impacted teachers in a negative way. However, all three principals also expressed that they felt they strived under the pressure and were pleased with some of the progress being made on their benchmark goals. Community School Directors expressed less frustration with the DOE, but asked for more time to learn and improve.

Year one is always rocky. You learn from it. I think we'll be much more proactive about how we introduce people, how we integrate people into different aspects of the school, and we hopefully won't have the same issues that we had this past year for next year. We didn't know. I don't think he even fully understands. I don't even fully understand.

Community School Director, School 9

Overall, there seemed to be a need for more understanding of what a community school should
and can be, as well as the role of key staff members within the school. Community School Directors also stressed the need for more time to help relationships within the school grow and for the school to learn to function as a community school.

**Impact of Policy**

Participants in this study were asked about the ways in which New York City Department of Education policy helps or hinders the community school model. There was very little agreement about the impact of New York City (NYC) policy on this work, however a few concrete recommendations emerged. One principal mentioned that when the CBO organized trips during the school day he must find a DOE staff member to accompany the group, which created an unnecessary drain on resources but also reinforced the idea that CBO staff were not accountable. A director discussed the expense associated with opening fees to keep the school open on weekends and evening, which are waived for renewal schools but not for other community schools. Most community schools operate with Compass or SONYC funding from the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, as part of this funding the opening fees for expanded school time and a small amount of professional development. However, this does not cover Saturday programming or programming after 6pm on weekdays. The expense of these fees hinder schools from enacting the design of Dewey (1903) and Mason (1967) that serves as a hub open to the community on evenings and weekends.

There was also some confusion about CBO staff running academic and enrichment programming during day school. While there does not seem to be a clear policy restricting this work, some school and union leaders expressed that it could be a threat to the teaching staff. This reinforces a theme that emerged in a few interviews, where DOE felt threatened by CBO
staff and expressed fear that they were being replaced. Lastly, another tension that was not supported by clear policy was access to data. While some schools freely share report cards, attendance data and test score results with their CBO partners, others seem hesitant. As a result, CBO staff has difficulty using this data to inform programming and show results for their funding sources. While, New York City does have an agreement regarding sharing data, this policy does not seem to be clearly enacted in every school. Generally, this lack of clarity identifies a larger trend of no clear policy guiding this work that is available to all partners.

5.5 Survey Analysis

Nine out of the ten schools in this study participated in the school environment survey. School 1 is a charter school and thus did not participate. Ultimately, schools with principals that embraced distributed leadership and clear systems for communication scored higher in surveys of teachers and parents. Because of this, there were a few schools that were established partnerships but continued to struggle, and thus, had lower scores than their counterparts with excelling partnerships. These survey results further informed this study’s classification of schools as, exploring, emerging, maturing or excelling, discussed in the methodology chapter. In this chapter, there is also an overview of each school in chart 3.5. However, it should be noted that school 2 and school 6 are both high schools in the Bronx. School 4, 7 and 9 are elementary schools in upper Manhattan. The two middle schools in upper Manhattan are School 5 and 10. The renewal school are all in the Bronx, they are, school 3 and 8 are renewal Middle Schools in the Bronx and school 6 is a Bronx renewal high school. The three renewal schools are the newest partnerships in this study.
As part of the analysis of the survey, we first must note the rates of participation for each school. Citywide, the total number of parents that completed the survey was 49,733. In total 70,172 teachers completed the survey (NYC DOE, 2017). This chart identifies the number of students in each school, the size of each school varies from 202 to 646. Each household is assigned one parent/guardian survey.

![Number of Students by School](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm)

Figure 5.1: Number of Students by School  

The next chart shows the percentage of completion of the school environment survey for parents, students and teachers for each school. As we juxtapose these two charts there does not seem to be a correlation between size of school and rate teacher survey participation.
School 6 and School 8 had parent participation rates that were much lower than both the citywide average and that of the other community schools within this study. The higher rates of parent participation in longstanding community schools may indicate a higher level of parent participation in these school surveys. Also, parent participation in the school survey in the two high schools of the study, school 2 and school 6 were notably lower than other community schools. Both the High Schools and Renewal Schools had the lowest rates of parent survey participation. As previously discussed, elementary schools did not elicit responses from students. However, this study only focuses on questions for parents and teachers. Otherwise, the participation rates of students were similar to parent participation, lower in high schools and renewal schools.
Many of the leadership questions relate to Senge (2012) and the National Center for School Climate’s research on collaborative vision and the importance of a clear vision to creating a healthy school climate. Not surprisingly, in those schools in which community school directors indicated the presences of a strong and functional partnership, more teachers expressed that the principal articulates a clear vision.


A key component of a strong school climate is leadership that articulates a clear vision. The responses to the survey were a bit surprising. As schools with strong partnerships, such as, school 2, school 9, and school 5 had more than 50 percent of teachers strongly agree that the school has a clear vision. In contrast, school 8, who has one of the most cohesive partnerships,
but a very new principal, had 19 percent of teachers disagree and 6 percent strongly disagree. This school also had very high teacher participation in the survey. Overall the two renewal middle schools, school 3 and 8, had the highest number of teachers disagreeing to the idea of the principal communicates a clear vision that is connected to the programs offered within the school. Likewise, these teachers seemed less likely to collaboratively plan or feel they had influence over school policy. What is particularly interesting about these two schools is that these survey outcomes do not coincide with the ideas that emerged in interviews with school leaders. School 8 has perhaps one of the strongest leadership collaboration of all the schools interviewed, whereas school 3 struggles quite a bit with consistent structures and communication. This might show some lack of validity for either the interview questions relating the rest of the school climate, or support the idea that there was need for additional exploration beyond the school survey questions.

One of the most informative survey questions, seeks to determine how teachers believe programs offered are connected to the school’s instructional vision.
Among the questions considered in this study, “programs offered are connected to our school’s vision” had the highest rate of disagree and strongly disagree responses. This may suggest that community schools need to periodically revisit the school vision, or that there is a lack of communication within community schools to help teachers, students and parents understand the connection. This issue also emerged in interviews. Respondents noted that the school principal created a vision and the expectation that the community school leaders needed to mold their programs accordingly, rather than having an active role in creating the vision. Perhaps this lack of agency or connection to the school vision exists for both teacher and partnering CBO, or this indicates the need for more inclusive visioning or goal setting process with the entire school community.

In a similar vein, the question “once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure it is working” can provide an understanding of the assessment of systems in place and the extent to which the school is a learning organization.
The two middle school renewal schools had the highest level of disagree or strongly disagree on the statement “once we start a new program, we follow up to make sure it is working.”. This may reflect some frustration with the renewal process, which has been criticized as creating too much quick change with little time for adjustment. It may also point to a deeper struggle with community schools being identified as a different approach to schooling, rather than just another program within a school. If the community school is identified as merely a program, that shows a lack of school integration. This has been identified as common frustration among community school leaders and practitioners. Interestingly, the renewal high school in this study had a more positive response to this question. The reason for this may be twofold. Firstly, this school leader held multiple retreats with teachers to discuss the renewal process and discuss school visioning.
and provides space for collaborative input. Secondly, their CBO partnership is focused primarily on mental health services and attendance, and the CBO is less integrated into the daily programming of the school, so it may reflect that program silo phenomenon that is discussed in interview responses.

The two high schools, school 2 and school 6, emerged as having some of the highest ratings from teachers, both seemed to prioritize feedback from teacher and parent leaders, had programs that were connected to the school vision, and had teachers that participated in instructional planning.

![Figure 5.6: Responses regular meetings with teachers](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm)

Interestingly, these two schools had principals that were easily available for interview and extremely reflective about their work and systems. They both spoke about times which they worked with the entire staff, either examining their values or reflecting upon how they
themselves and the students were impacted by the unrest regarding the killing of black men by police officers. Both principals expressed that they were unsure how to lead their school is discussing race and racism in the classroom and while they felt they had team members who would have these important discussions, the did not feel they had staff members who could provide leadership to this work.

Another question that can illuminate the extent to which schools have systems for communication with parents is below.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of responses for the statement: The principal in this school promotes family and community involvement (parents).](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm)

**Figure 5.7: Response promote community involvement**  

School 2 had the highest feedback constantly from parents, with 90% strongly agreeing that the school leader creates a sense of community within the school. This is a stand out result, however, it should be noted that their parent participant rates were lower than other established community schools, but were on par with the city average at 51 percent participation. This feedback seems the same open distributed approach that is taken with school staff is also experienced by parents.
This school has a comprehensive parent engagement and leadership program, whereas, the parent engagement at school 6 is not managed by the CBO overtly, they focus more on attendance and mental health services.

Figure 5.8: Response parent feedback Source: Adapted from survey results from New York City School Survey. (2017) 2015-2016 School Quality Guides. Retrieved from http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm

One of the questions that speaks to distributed leadership the most, is “at this school, the principal/school leader encourages feedback through regular meetings with parent and teacher leaders. Again, we see the same trend where the established upper Manhattan schools are somewhat consistent, where the new Bronx renewal school have lower favorable results. Overall, the elementary schools had very high strongly agree and agree responses to these questions which suggests that there are set practices in place through both the school and CBO. As this
researcher analyzed the survey questions identified for this study, the same trends occurred. The two high schools, with leaders with a strong distributed leadership style, were consistently strongly highly rated in collaborative planning, sense of community and general feedback from parents and teachers. Existing community schools schooled had higher rates of agreement about parent feedback from newer community schools and renewal schools. The renewal middle schools had the highest ratings of disagree and strongly disagree from both teachers and parents.

**Survey Results**

There was little conclusive data from surveys alone, however when triangulated with the interviews we gain a greater understanding of the schools in this study. There did not seem to be a discernable difference between Bronx and Manhattan schools. The researcher anticipated there might be difference because Manhattan schools had more experienced school leaders and had a longer tenure as established community schools. The Bronx schools are in two of the poorest congressional district in the country. However, comparing long standing community schools, such as; school 9, school 7, school 2, school 10, there was a slightly higher sense of community and family involvement within the school compared to the other schools in the study and the citywide average. This was evidenced in the rate of participation in the survey, as well as survey results.

Because the surveys only include DOE staff members, students and parents, much of our analysis of the partnership are not reflected in this data. However, because this study identifies the school leader as one of the most important indicators of school success, the questions assessing the school leaders’ vision, follow through and program implementation remains pertinent. Ideally, the department of education would include CBO staff in the survey moving
forward, as it claims to assess school climate and all school members should be included in that assessment. It would be interesting to see in what way, if any, the perception of the school, and the school leadership, would change if all staff members in the community school provided feedback.

5.6 Findings

A review of both surveys and interviews, highlights how difficult it is to utilize a distributed leadership approach in New York city public schools. This reinforces why this study identified only three “excelling community schools” in the area of management and governance out of the ten schools in this study. Many schools struggle to create a school vision that is inclusive, interactive and is a pillar to support all aspects of the work within the school. Likewise, the importance and complexity of creating a school culture that is open to feedback, acts as a mindful organization, and has clear systems in place is reinforced by both the surveys and interviews. Renewal schools are in the process of a transformation, and this has caused struggle and frustration for many within this system. The roll out of this process is ideal for investigation and analysis. This is a difficult time in education and school leaders must think differently about how to manage a community school. The evidence suggests this may need focus, technical support and coaching. Moreover, this should lead to some rethinking of the ways that both principals and directors are trained within both their educational systems and on the job. These findings support the concrete recommendations discussed in the final chapter of this study.

Chapter 6
6.1 Introduction

This dissertation examines the leadership of community schools in the hope of generating theories to improve the model and creating effective systems within the bureaucracy of New York City public schools. As mentioned earlier, the Coalition for Community Schools defines a community school as follows:

(A community school) is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone—all day, every day, evenings and weekends.

(Coalition for Community Schools Website, 2015)

Community schools are led through a partnership between a principal and community school director. The partnership between community school directors (CSD’s) and principals has not been studied extensively and is crucial to the success of a community school. This study is a narrative inquiry with a paradigm of critical theory. The data examined are transcripts from interviews with directors and principals from ten New York City public schools and school environment surveys from the New York City Department of Education. The schools targeted for this study have a population of students that is at or above the city average for free or reduced school lunch, emergent bilinguals, and students with individualized educational plans. Each of the schools has been classified according the National Center for Community Schools’ continuum of community school governance. The interviews were analyzed by critical discourse
analysis, and the surveys were used for triangulation to gain deeper understanding of how the school leadership is experienced by teachers and parents. The study was conducted by an insider researcher who has worked for community based organizations for fourteen years and who faced a few obstacles when recruiting principal participants. This chapter will discuss the findings from this study, both anticipated and unanticipated, some of the limitations and generalizability claims, issues of trustworthiness, actionable recommendations, and areas for future research. These findings led to the formulation of stages of partnership within community schools, which were identified as unstructured, transactional, and transformational. The key recommendations are organized by the three main factors of the guiding question of this research, which examine the values, beliefs, and processes of school leaders. These recommendations are targeted toward policy makers, school leaders, community based organizations, and the department of education.

6.2 Findings

Since A Nation at Risk, a 1983 report by the National Commission on Education Excellence that predicted how the inadequacies of public education would lead to the downfall of the United States, doubts regarding the efficacy of American schools have been a constant topic of discussion in modern politics. Recently, this debate on how to reform education has been shaped by an overemphasis on standardized testing and closing schools that are deemed as failing due to a record of poor test scores. In New York City, the community school model has emerged as part of a solution to fix failing schools (Kirp, 2016). This conceptualization of "failing schools" is problematic because it takes a blame and deficit approach. However, part of the appeal of the community school strategy is its acknowledgement of how each community has unique strengths and needs. This movement, often called turnaround or renewal, considers John
Dewey's (1916) concept of engaging the community in education, making the school a community hub, and bringing education alive through relevancy. While this study is not conclusively prescriptive regarding community schools as a turnaround model, the use of the model as a turnaround approach has thrust it into the limelight, making it ripe for inspection. This discussion on how to strengthen the model through assessing the partnership and leadership strategies necessary for a community school to excel is relevant and urgent.

In Peter Senge's (2012) book *Schools That Learn*, he discusses applying his tenets of a learning organization to the school setting. He starts with Dewey's (1916) driving argument that schools, and all communities, foster a connection between living and learning, and argues that at times the structure of school, perhaps due to bureaucracy, stymies this relationship. He contends that the first step in making a school a learning organization is engaging all members of the system and having them develop their capabilities together. A key piece of this research is understanding ways in which CBO partners are included and excluded in the school. Exclusion can curtail a “systems thinking” approach to school improvement and learning. Ultimately, this study aims to influence school leadership practices and begin to guide leaders and policymakers in creating a comprehensive school climate that is both inclusive and reflective.

There are many processes, values, and behaviors that contribute to or detract from a school and CBO partnership. The values that emerged were those of putting students first and opening the school to any project, program, or initiative that may benefit the students, their families, and the community. Likewise, a value of learning, the belief that school leaders do not have all the answers, and a willingness to be guided by the expertise and proximity of their team as emerged as central to cultivating a strong partnership. Lastly, after some analysis, lack of structured school values and vision also emerged as a theme within interviews with school
leaders. Some behaviors of leaders materialized in analysis of the structures, or lack of structure, that guided the ways in which leaders brought members of the school community to the table to discuss problems that had arisen in the school. Many participants mentioned the role of cabinet meetings, where in many schools, all administrative school decisions were made. It seems clear that the community school director should participate in these meetings, however, less than half of the directors in the study were members of the school cabinet. Those school leaders that articulated a distributed process of decision making through multiple committees and working groups had more positive ratings by parents and faculty on the school environment surveys. As far as ongoing processes, the cultivation of mindfulness by engaging in a reflective process in meetings with the leadership team was identified as a practice that strengthened the team and the quality of their work. Those school leaders that described values or behaviors that embodied a mindful leader explained the ways in which their team learned from one another and felt they made better decisions through honest feedback and collaboration. These findings will be further analyzed and synthesized into formal recommendations throughout this dissertation, influenced by the conceptual framework, research, and context of this work.

6.3 Structures in Community Schools

In this assessment of community school partnerships, two important factors emerged as crucial to success. They are structures for communication and the cultivation of a relationship in which safe reflection can occur. To organize these ideas, this researcher has classified the three levels of partnerships that emerged in this study. They are: unstructured partnerships, structured but transactional partnerships, and transformational partnerships. The first, an **unstructured partnership** was one in which the community school director (CSD) was not a member of the
cabinet and found it difficult to have consistent and meaningful opportunities to discuss issues and problem-solve with the principal. In these schools, the systems were unclear and the leadership approach of the principal was not distributed. The second type of partnership was **transactional**. In this type of partnership, the principal and community school director did have systems in place for discussion, however there was not a level of dialogue that created the opportunity to change and address mental models. Last was a **transformational partnership**, which meets this study’s definition of partnership, where each member is changed by the partnership. In this category, each partner articulated ways in which their partner has challenged them to think about their work differently, or they reversed a decision based on dialogue with their partner. These partnerships were also ones in which team learning was involved, and showed evidence of high levels of trust.

In unstructured partnerships and transactional partnerships, a clear division between the DOE and CBO existed within the community school. The language utilized reflected an “us and them” mentality: when the principal said “we,” they meant the DOE team, and when the director said “we,” they meant the CBO team. In interviews with directors who were in unstructured partnerships, the director would guess at the values and mental models that were shaping the principal’s decisions. For example, in these partnerships a principal might offer concerns about liability without specifying the reason for the concern or generating potential solutions; they often identified barriers without solutions. In the interviews, directors would share that their principal was happy with changes in attendance or unhappy with lack of communication, but would not be able to chart ways in which they should continue to improve. There was no evidence of collaborative systems thinking. Likewise, in these partnerships, the director had not been given space to provide ideas and solutions, and the work of the CBO was not seen as
integral to the day-to-day functioning of the school. In transactional partnerships, structures for communication exist but are often one-directional. While these partners meet regularly and at times co-plan, they lack the trust and time to engage in reflective dialogue. These programs still exist in silos, but both partners are informed about program decisions being made in each silo. One principal noted how siloed his school is when they hold events. He explains;

A lot of the events we had, you just saw CBO staff. They just did everything. They served, they organized, they cleaned up…It didn’t matter that I went every time and did the same. I put on the gloves, I served the food. My APs did and it didn’t matter. (the teachers) just felt like that’s their thing. The CBO will do that and we will do this.

Principal, School 8

In this school, the process of reflection is in its beginning stages, however, while the school leadership has begun to develop a transformational leadership approach, this has not expanded to the entire school. In transactional partnerships, the directors said their job was to serve the vision of the school, not to co-create or influence that vision. In these meetings, school leaders took a stance of “here is what I am doing and why” but could not evolve to “here are some ideas of how we could both improve our practice” or “how do you think that event went, how can we do better next time?”

In their article Partnerships in Service Learning and Civic Engagement, Bringle et. al. (2009) argue that transformational partnerships are developed through closeness, equity and integrity. They explain that closeness is created through frequency of interaction, diversity of activities that are the basis of these interactions, and strength of influence on the other person’s behavior, decisions, plans, and goals. Thus, if a member of the partnership considers themselves to be the one decider in the relationship, it is difficult to cultivate closeness. For equity to occur
in a transformation partnership (Bringle, 2009) when the inputs and outputs are unequal, outcomes are proportional to inputs at a similar ratio. For example, in a community school principals are disproportionally—perhaps 80 percent—responsible for academic outcomes, but in an equitable partnership, the community school director will still hold 20 percent accountability and decision-making power. Lastly, integrity is a clarity in values and moral principles that connects behaviors and choices to outcomes and worldview. In a partnership with integrity, each partner can explain their partner’s ways of thinking and acting based on their moral code—for example, by knowing your principal prioritizes “putting children first” a director can guess what opinion he or she may have or what decision he or she may make.

While closeness, equity, and integrity are necessary values, few leaders emerged from this study exhibiting the behaviors and processes in place for transformational partnership. Thus, the research suggests that these practices are motivated by values, skill development, and practices that can be learned. For a transformational partnership to occur, both leaders must have openness to team feedback and a willingness to share leadership through distributed decision making. Transformational leaders create room for reflection in meetings and build it into the structure of this work. This chart highlights the characteristics of each type of partnership outlined above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstructured partnership</th>
<th>Transactional partnership</th>
<th>Transformational partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No clear vision</td>
<td>Vision exists but not co-created</td>
<td>Vision re-visited and evolves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unscheduled meetings</td>
<td>Scheduled meetings</td>
<td>Scheduled meetings with important decisions made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship lacks trust and equity</td>
<td>Relationship has some equity and integrity</td>
<td>Relationship has closeness, equity and integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the above chart speaks specifically to the relationship between school leaders examined in this study—the community school director and the principal—this same framework could be applied to all aspects of school leadership. For example, these categories could be used for a curriculum committee, parent leadership group, or grade-based committees. With distributed leadership, the school should consist of many leadership teams, with the goal of each of them becoming transformational.

In the methodology section of this dissertation, the assessment of the schools within this study which categorizes each as exploring, emerging, maturing and excelling on the continuum for community school development developed by the National Center for Community Schools, creates an interesting juxtaposition and informs the above characterization of unstructured, transactional and transformational partnerships, as defined by the continuum framework. Both categorizations are a product of the lack of structure, integration and agreement. However, this distillation of the partnership focuses a bit more on the relationships themselves and the cultivation of closeness, equity, integrity and trust.

The findings regarding capital in a community school and the equity issues that emerged in this study influence the cultivation of partnership. Many directors in this study expressed concerns about the equity issues that they felt as directors for themselves and their staff. This was pay equity, as well as the way their time was valued and respect for the responsibilities they managed as a director. Likewise, because they are not part of the union, they felt that some of the work that was considered “out of contract” was thrust upon them and their team. As Bringle
et al. (2009) explains, equity between partners is essential to cultivating a transformational partnership. This is difficult to achieve if directors feel they are deemed as having less cultural capital. The equity ratio cannot be characterized accurately in this case—for example, in the quote above where the principal explains how teachers did not host, clean, serve, or participate in school events. Thus, the recommendations in this chapter will consider these equity issues, not only because they are necessary to creating a more democratic system, but because they are an essential ingredient to partnership.

6.4 Unanticipated Findings

A theme that emerged in this research was a distancing and lack of comfort addressing social issues relating to racism, particularly among the principals interviewed. Some participating principals quite candidly expressed that they were unsure how to support teachers in having these complex conversations with students. One principal explained that his administrative staff facilitated restorative circles with their colleagues in reaction to the death of unarmed black men in Ferguson and Staten Island, however had more difficulty supporting teachers in connecting this conversation to their daily work in the classroom. Participants were particularly reticent when their school faculty lacked diversity or did not mirror the student demographics. School leaders articulated an unwillingness to “take on” race related topics, much less engage in a reflective examination of how race influences the dynamics within their classrooms and the school as a whole. Other principals expressed that there was no racial conflict and thus no reason for discussion. While it may be presumptuous to argue that simply because there is deep-seated racial division in society, schools are a crucial component of that structural racism, it’s true that the New York City school system is one of the most racially
segregated school systems in the country (Kuscera & Orfield, 2014), every school in New York City is likely influenced by racism. A critical lens would imply that racial conflict among students and staff is worthy of inquiry, as is school leaders’ anxiety about approaching this issue, particularly when racism and white supremacy are prominent in the enactment of federal policy and in constant debate in the news.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate (1995) explain that critical race theory can be used to understand education inequity, and the application of this theory is built upon three important concepts. They are: 1) Racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American life 2) A reinterpretation of ineffective civil rights laws 3) Challenging the claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy. In Ladson-Billings and Tate’s second assertion, regarding ineffectual civil rights laws, they build on the reality that public schools remain segregated due to white flight and failed efforts at integration. Richard Milner (2010) elaborates on the many assumptions and mindsets that lead to claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy. His theoretical framework explains that to close the opportunity gap, educators must 1) reject color-blindness, 2) cultivate the ability and skill to work through, understand, and transcend cultural conflicts, 3) understand how the meritocracy operates, 4) shift and recognize low expectations and a deficit mindset, 5) reject context-neutral mindsets and practices. If school leadership and teachers have difficulty broaching these topics with their peers, how will they manage with their students? Why does this seem to be such uncharted territory for principals?

In this study, community school directors expressed some frustration regarding what they saw as a willful ignorance of race and racism on the part of the school leadership. A few explained that they found their own ways to address concerns, particularly with students,
regarding cultural and language differences and bullying related to differences. Other directors expressed the desire to take more of a leadership role in addressing structural racism in the school, feeling that their staff, many of which had a social work, youth leadership, or youth development background, were well positioned to facilitate meaningful dialogue. Ideally, a dialogue about the ways gender, race, and cultural capital influence the work in a school is a component of a transformational partnership. Interestingly, none of the principals in the study relied on their partner for support regarding this complex work. As Terry Husband Jr. (2011) explains, educators seem to be operating from a colorblind or politically neutral stance and would benefit from more support and training in an antiracist educational framework. Much like critical pedagogy or democratic education, antiracist leaders encourage their staff to engage in dialogue, critique, and reflection to build their pedagogical muscles to become antiracist educators. Antiracist educators encourage their students to engage in critique, employ a practice that is guided by theory and action, operate with an understanding that life and learning is political, and recognize the centrality of class oppression in most social issues (Husband, 2011).

6.5 Limitations and Transferability of Findings

This study examined ten schools with three partnering organizations within New York City, thus, these findings are not generalizable to all community schools. The model itself is built on the unique nature of each school and community, and there is quite a bit of variance between different community based organizations. This study aims to achieve the standard of internal generalizability. Maxwell (2005) describes internal generalizability as the generalizability of conclusions within the setting or group studied. Ultimately, the themes that emerged in this study regarding the values, behaviors, and processes that contributed to and
detracted from the partnership remain true within these schools. Although these themes were
significant enough to generate recommendations for practice, those recommendations cannot
assume what is or is not occurring in other community schools within or outside New York City.
However, because this research is situated and understood to be juxta posed against larger social
issues and structural inequality, it would stand to argue that some of the themes that emerged
may be comparable to those of other schools and organizations in New York City.

It was difficult to obtain a representative sample for this study. Ideally, each school in
the study would have both a community school director and a principal participate in this
research. However, this study is lopsided, in that twice as many community school directors as
principals participated in the interviewing process. This is a significant finding, in that those
principals that participated scored quite high on the survey in measures of distributed leadership,
such as “the principal meets with parents and guardians” and “the principal meets regularly with
school leaders.” The participating principals may be disproportionately invested in the model,
which may skew the results. However, we cannot assume about why those principals did not
participate were unavailable to be interviewed. Nevertheless, the lower number of principal
participants corresponds with the theme regarding the capital of the community school directors
and staff members. Ultimately, the community school directors asked their principal partners to
participate in this study, but many of those principals were not able to find time to meet with this
researcher. This mirrors what one director describes as the dance they do to find time to meet
with the principal, and may reflect the lack of structure that exists in many partnerships.

This study had ten participating schools, nine of which were public community schools,
one of which was a charter. This is a small sample size; ideally twenty-five to thirty schools
would have participated in the study, and additional statistical analysis of the survey data could
have been performed. With additional schools, community schools would have included partners from multiple organizations. In the case of this study, only three partnering community based organizations were analyzed and these were disproportionately from one large community based organization. Outreach to five additional schools was performed in this study by phone and email to community school directors. However, no responses were received from those five schools within the year and a half it took to complete this research.

If the researcher had greater bandwidth and availability, additional triangulation would have further fortified the analysis of leadership within participating schools. For example, it may have been helpful to observe the meetings of those schools that were identified as having an excelling partnership, as well as examine documents such as meeting agendas and minutes. Due to the insider researcher status of this author, however, this might have been viewed as intrusive. Also, time and availability of the researcher made this difficult. This could be a possible approach for future research.

6.6 Actionable Recommendations

In a recent study from Harvard School of Education (Brown & Olson, 2015), a group of school leaders reported that 89% felt overwhelmed, 84% neglected to take care of themselves when stressed, and 80% were hard on themselves when they performed less than perfectly. Thus, the most pervasive identified need from this study was that school leaders, who are essential to the success of the school, need more guidance and support. Support can be provided in multiple ways: through training, supervision, self-care, and cultivating teams that are functionally managing and addressing pervasive or adaptive problems. The following
recommendations are organized as values, behaviors, and processes that contribute to an
excelling community school model with a transformational partnership.

Values
Mindfulness in Leadership
The school leaders in this study reported feeling frustrated and overwhelmed by the
responsibility of their position. When asked how they coped with this ongoing stress, some
discussed reflecting with their team, loved ones, or friends, or contemplating the work on a long
ride home. One participant cultivated a practice of meditation. In their book The Mindful School
Leader, Brown and Olsen (2015) highlight the importance of a mindfulness practice.

  With practice, mindfulness can allow educational leaders to “disengage from habitual
  actions.” [Leaders] become more able to observe [themselves] in action and act more
effectively in the midst of chaos, overstimulation, and threat, a condition of the lives of
many educational leaders (p20).

Particularly due to technology, it often seems like the work is endless, and many leaders fall into
the feeling of constant crisis, negotiating long days without their full attention due to
multitasking and navigating multiple priorities. The difficulty of the role of school leader cannot
be overemphasized, and cultivating mindfulness is one way of supporting this work. Mindful
leadership is being present and engaged. It may also include focusing on breathing; pausing and
re-centering during stressful events; speaking with attention to thoughts, feelings, and emotions;
and listening with empathy and the goal of understanding. Increasingly, there are programs to
support this work, such as Mindfulness in Schools and the Institute for Mindful Leadership.
These resources are available to leaders who seek them out, however, mindfulness practice needs to be a core component of educational leadership preparation programming and the structural support provided to leaders in New York City schools—particularly for those leaders who are navigating the complex terrain of community school partnership. Exploring the possibility of this work with school leaders is a strong recommendation for this study, as mindfulness will create a foundation for reflexive practice and structures.

Values Dialogue

Bringle’s (2009) definition of closeness includes a clear articulation of values. With the aim of cultivating transformational partnerships in community schools, there must be room and space to consider some of the larger questions that emerge in the literature review of this study. Based on responses of participants, partners would benefit from discussing their ideas about the purpose of education to contemplate what drives each person to do this work. In this study, important values—like prioritizing children—emerged, but the meaning of those values were somewhat vague. Part of cultivating integrity is figuring out what these values look like in practice. By integrating mindfulness, a leader may sharpen their values by creating space to reflect and connect their feelings.

Having a clear school vision has been identified as a significant predictor of organizational learning (Kurland, 2010) and cultivating a positive school climate (National School Climate Center, 2015). The same way leaders should connect their actions to their values, the school establish its own values as part of the visioning process. While the school vision is a statement that explains where the school wants to be, the values embody the concepts and beliefs that will guide behaviors to attain that vision. When a school has a clear vision, it is
easier to assess progress and alignment with values and outcomes. Most of the leaders spoke about their vision in broad terms and didn’t have a clear method of orienting new staff and students to this vision. One of the community based organizations in the study embarked upon a visioning process where staff members from their community school discussed their priorities for this work and created a list of specific values that captured what they wanted to prioritize for their school and all those who worked within it. This process of collaborative values creation could be replicated with the school community.

Behaviors

Building Capabilities Together

One of Senge’s (2012) core concepts, which is embodied in the partnership categories above, is building clear structures with reflective dialogue. Integrating this process into meetings will propel a partnership from a transactional to a transformational one, however, a certain amount of mindfulness and openness to cultivate that closeness is needed. Some directors expressed that the culture of their school lacked some of the components identified by the National Center for School Climate, such as trust and mutual respect, and has been embedded with finger-pointing and blaming behaviors which preclude reflection and accountability. In these cases, training in mindfulness and creating a healthy school climate must be provided to the leaders. Specifically, there may be a need to explore the mental models of school leaders regarding their responsibility in cultivating school climate and the ways in which relational trust is being either cultivated or undermined. What stories have they created about their colleagues that are creating an obstacle for honest dialogue? Are there differences—like age, education,
socioeconomic background, ethnicity, or race—that are contributing to those disruptive or harmful mental models?

Identifying and deconstructing mental models will lead to improved systems that will create a school that is a learning organization. This is difficult within a traditional school, but significantly more complex within a community school, which typically has complex power structures and limited opportunities for the entire school to interface. One finding in this study was that collaborative professional development seldom occurs between CBO and DOE staff, yet was extremely beneficial when it did not occur. This is partly due to scheduling difficulties, but also because each organization has their own requirements and systems in place for developing their staff. While this study argues for integrating structured reflection into the daily practice of leadership, there is also a need to create opportunities throughout the year to bring the entire community school together with the purpose of examining values and vision and cultivating closeness.

"Trickle Down” Leadership Approach

Senge (2012) and Freire (2002) argue that schools train people only to obey authority and follow the rules unquestioningly and therefore they have poorly prepared their students for an increasingly complex and interdependent world. Senge also implies that this is the leadership approach of many school leaders. It is not a distributed approach. The buck stops with the principal. This is the exact language that one of the principals in this study used to explain his role, casting himself as the ultimate decider. However, not all principals had this attitude toward their work, and, like many directors, understood they did not have all the answers and that they made better decisions in collaboration with those who were “closest to the problem.” Directors
were more likely to describe cultivating their staff, whom they see as future leaders, as an important component of their work. Interestingly, those leaders who had a distributed approach when working with their team didn’t consistently incorporate community school partners in this approach and didn’t have specifically designated youth leadership structures for the students. Thus, there seems to be a need for more support to build democratic leadership among both staff and students. While many school leaders articulated the importance of youth leadership in their schools, they had difficulty describing specific programs or structures that support this work. However, and perhaps more notably, because they did not have their teachers and partners lead, they could not model these practices. This concept of “trickle down leadership” posits that when staff practice democratic leadership in a school, they are more likely to model and encourage these practices for and with students. While there was some evidence of this within the two high schools in this study, it is a place for additional research.

Likewise, while many claimed that youth leadership was important, they did not discuss it in their creation of a school vision. Students, Senge (2012) argues, are the players that see all side of the nested systems of education, however, they are seldom given the opportunity to influence the system. What emerged in this study is that leadership systems existed primarily in the after-school programs, and were deemed the domain of the CBO and not woven into the essential framework of the school. Much like the arts, this is another way there has been a curricular narrowing in New York City public schools, with a heightened emphasis on testing subjects. However, democratic schooling should be understood as a pedagogy and not a subject or activity.
Processes

Ongoing School Visioning and Partnership Agreements

Lack of clarity of school vision emerged in the interviews, and some of the schools scored lower than the city average on this indicator. Significantly, the extent to which CSD’s felt they had a voice in that vision varied quite a bit. A contrast emerged in this study between renewal schools more longstanding community school, because in these newer partnerships schools that had to undertake a visioning process. However, within the subset of renewal schools, some schools took a more systematic approach, engaging all members of the school community, and others had a more top-down approach to school visioning. Creating a collaborative school vision is a difficult process, and leaders may need more support to create an inclusive process. In this study, older partnerships did not have a clear vision, and there was a need to create a process where the entire school community evaluates the vision, what they are doing to realize this vision, and how they can shift the work to ensure that programs and practices align.

One trend that emerged in this work that is often identified by the National Center for Community Schools in their discussion of the continuum of community school development was that of a school moving to an earlier stage on the continuum when a new leader joined that school. In this study, four of the principals had less than two years of experience as a principal, however, of the principals interviewed only two were newer to the job. Thinking through a systems perspective with the goal of creating a transformational partnership, it takes time to create a relationship where closeness, equity, and integrity exist (Bringle et al., 2009). While one of the clear recommendations—particularly from renewal schools—is the need for time, there is also a need for a structure to examine the partnership. A memo of understanding (MOU) is
created and signed through the process of applying for grants, but this process is not a discussion as much as a signature that is needed for an external application. This should be a reflective process that discusses the roles, services, and relationship between the partners. An example of a reflection form that is used by Hive Chicago is included at the end of this paper as appendix 1.

Clarifying Roles and Hierarchy

The lack of clarity regarding the role of the community school director emerged in most principal interviews and in a few of the community school director interviews as well. The biggest misconception concerned hierarchy, with principals feeling they provided supervision to the community school directors and the directors following their own chain of command in their community based organization. In the strategic plan for community schools, the role is briefly described as follows:

Well-trained and experienced Community School Directors effectively secure and integrate additional human and financial resources into the school to help address student needs, whether these relate to health, hunger, or even homelessness. They partner with principals to identify priority areas, and then efficiently and creatively blend funding streams to support the most impactful services. This strategic division of labor between the two leaders allows the principal to focus on instruction and supporting teachers in the classroom.

(Strategic Plan, 2017)

The language in this plan suggests an equity between principals and community school directors, explaining a division of leaders and calling it a partnership. This was not the experience of directors in this study. Furthermore, it is not a job description that outlines the duties and
responsibilities of the role. It might be helpful for the city to create and share this type of document as well as cultivate a dialogue with new principals regarding the role and its accompanying expectations.

Currently, there is no formal system for the principal to weigh in on the CSD and for the CSD to provide feedback to the principal. One simple way to democratize feedback would be to include CBO staff in the school environment survey, providing an opportunity for them to publicly weigh in on the school, its leadership, and its relationship with the community. Secondly, as mentioned above, there should be an annual process of assessment to reflect upon their processes and relationships. Lastly, each leader should participate in the evaluation process for their partner. This will only be effective if both parties provide feedback. For the department of education, this can be built into the quality review process, and for community based organizations, this may be participating in an annual evaluation. These three processes may eliminate some of the concerns that emerged regarding accountability.

Clear Policies Guiding Community Schools

The work of community schools has largely been molded by a lack of policy. There was no publicly available document about the practice until the recent administration’s development of the New York City Community Schools division of the Department of Education. The creation of the New York City office of community schools led to one guiding document that has emerged publicly regarding this work: the New York City Community Schools Strategic Plan (nyc.gov, 2017). However, as the name suggests, this report is not constructed for policy, it is a plan for roll-out, funding, and key components of the strategy. Due to the lack of documentation, much of the work of developing community schools has been left up to the
discretion of the principal of the school. Some of the policy issues that emerged from the interviews were: needing a DOE staff member for school trips, exorbitant opening fees that hindered offering programs on evening and weekends, lack of clarity regarding day school program coverage, lack of a clear accountability structure during emergencies, no guidelines on data sharing and confidentiality, and lack of transparent hierarchy structures for DOE and CBO staff. Some of these have been addressed within renewal and AIDP schools, as those schools have waived opening fees for evenings and weekends and have a data sharing agreement with a database that is accessible to CBO staff.

However, these issues continue to be a source of friction or confusion within other community schools. The holder of all policy information was the principal, and there was not a document that either community school directors or principals could reference to guide practice. However, an analysis of policy cannot ignore an elephant in the room within community schools, which is: Does this strategy promote an anti-union agenda? Advocates for community schools will argue that they are simply moving services that would be provided within the community into the school. However, when CBO staff are providing classroom coverage or mental health counseling, is that taking away from hiring a teacher or a DOE social worker? The community school model as an expansion of the non-profit industrial complex is a concern that has not been addressed publicly. Many community school directors reported feeling some tension from DOE staff based on a fear that they would lose their jobs. This is a real conflict in the work that needs to be addressed by the city and those within the community school movement. Currently, the lack of concrete policy is not helping to dissipate the understandable concerns of union members.

The second concern is: if arts, leadership, civic learning, and recreation are offered through that CBO, does this decrease the likelihood that a school will incorporate these programs
in day school, with an arts-certified licensed teacher? A few school leaders identified that after-school programming was the only place in which students were offered arts, music, dance, theater, or leadership programming. One might argue that the students in these schools would not get access to arts and leadership opportunities without the partnership, however, this reflects another educational policy dilemma. Is the community schools model supporting the de-prioritization and de-funding of arts programming in NYC public schools? This is another place for further research and policy scrutiny.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future study is expanding the scope by including more schools and providing a detailed examination of the school leaders’ behaviors and processes through participant observation and document analysis. This would strengthen the validity of the study and address the concern regarding involving only three CBO partners and disproportionately involving community school directors. Likewise, it would further diminish the threat of the research being conducted by an insider researcher with a background working in community based organizations.

Another area for future research regards the cultivation of antiracist school leaders and educators and exploring the potential for community schools to do this work. The community school is built on the idea of the community school as a hub for services, but the second act of this Deweyian (1916) dream is the possibility of creating space for the community to influence the school. Currently, every community in this study is grappling with issues like anti-immigrant and racist sentiment manifested in policy and practice through a Muslim ban and increased ICE enforcement. The question of policing and how young men of color are criminalized impacts the
students in New York City schools. The ways in which these issues are related to race and racism, as well as the paralyzing fear invoked in communities of color, are crucial to the lives of students and should be critiqued, analyzed, and discussed in classrooms. The community based organizations participating in this study identified as social service organizations or agencies. Their missions were focused on reducing poverty, and do not overtly prioritize social justice or community activism. How might schools look different if the partnering organization had a clear focus on social justice and community change? What if this work harkened back to the days of Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem in the 1940s and 1950s, where students and teachers were organizing community projects on health care, sanitation, and housing? Would it be possible for students and teachers to do that work collaboratively, while discussing the roles of race, power, capitalism, and inequality at play in their neighborhood? Thus, a study of schools with a social justice or activism focus that examines the leadership’s attitudes toward race and racism in their school and community would be an interesting space for future research.

6.9 Conclusion

A recent article in The New York Times (Leonhardt, 2017) highlighted how the Chicago school system showed tremendous improvements in reading and math scores after increasing the art and music programming within public schools, as well as an impressive increase in graduation rates. This is being attributed to the city’s focus on school leadership that emphasizes support, accountability, and autonomy (Leonhardt, 2017). The recommendations from this study are aimed at community school directors, principals, community based organizations, and the Department of Education’s New York City community schools initiative as it continues to grow and encompass more schools. Specifically, principals need more support to activate a paradigm
shift to understanding that community schools must be led with a distributed leadership mindset. This is not an easy shift, and tremendous external support and inward examination is needed to cultivate the systems to support a community school that learns. Furthermore, guiding policies must be created and publicly shared to create common expectations and foundations for this work. Leaders should be able to weigh in on their partner in an evaluative capacity, and all members of the school community, including CBO staff, should complete the school environment survey.

The vision that Elsie Clapp (Stack, 1999) uses to describe the Arthurdale school, which is, “a joint production built by living and learning and shaped by consent” cannot be realized if principals are not supported in cultivating mindfulness, provided with clear policies supporting the partnership, and encouraged to create processes for collaboration and professional development for the entire school. Likewise, leaders of community schools must consider the ways in which their practices embrace democratic leadership for both staff and students. The findings from this study, as well as our current political climate, identify a sharp need for social justice work within public community schools. With a transformational leadership partnership, the possibilities for the model are infinite.
Appendix 1: HIVE Partnership evaluation

How are we doing? How can we improve?

PARTNERSHIPS PROCESS & PROGRESS REFLECTION

PARTNERSHIP PROCESS:
- ☐ Is the partnership operating successfully? If not, where are the weaknesses?
- ☐ How well have goals for the partnership been defined and communicated?
- ☐ Are partners knowledgeable of the group’s process and expected outcomes?
- ☐ Is communication efficient and timely?
- ☐ How much time is spent on partnership activities (meetings? Flow-on work from meetings?)? Is the time commitment more, less or on par with your expectations?
- ☐ Is the partnership mutually beneficial to partners?
- ☐ How could partners’ needs and priorities be better met?
- ☐ What is the level of collaboration (integration) of the partnership? What is the ideal level of collaboration? What steps should be taken to achieve the ideal?
- ☐ Are the partnership members satisfied with the functioning, progress and leadership of the partnership?
- ☐ Is the partnership on track to accomplish goals and objectives?
- ☐ Is the partnership making a difference? Why? Why not?

FUNCTIONING OF THE PARTNERSHIP
- ☐ Meetings of the partners are at a convenient time
- ☐ Meetings of the partners are at a convenient place
- ☐ There are clear agendas for our meetings
- ☐ There are clear communications among partnership members
- ☐ Meeting minutes are captured and distributed to all members
- ☐ Partners are adhering to the roles & responsibilities defined during the CREATE stage of the partnerships.
- ☐ Everyone gets a chance to provide input
☐ Partners contribute to the meetings
☐ The atmosphere at meetings is positive
☐ The appropriate people are involved in the partnership
☐ There has not been a large amount of turnover among partnership members

**CLARITY OF GOALS/DIRECTION**
☐ All partners agree on and understand the purpose and goals of the partnership?

☐ The partnership group has terms of reference/MOU that is reviewed regularly and everyone is aware of and agrees with them?

☐ There is a regular review of the partnership’s achievements and direction?
☐ If changes are made, everyone is consulted?

**PARTNERSHIP CAPACITIES**
☐ There is someone whose job it is to ensure the smooth running of the partnership
☐ Leadership is consultative
☐ Tasks get assigned and completed
☐ There is enough time to accomplish the goals of the partnership
☐ The partnership is able to adapt to changes in staff
☐ All the key agencies/people are involved at an appropriate and expected level

☐ All of the partners have the support of their managers/agencies in the work they are doing
☐ The partnership is able to deal with conflict in a positive way

**PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE AIMS**
☐ The partnership has made progress towards achieving its goals
☐ There are tangible outcomes from the partnership to date
☐ There is agency/community recognition of what the partnership is trying to achieve?
☐ The partnership is continuing to grow and progress
☐ There is potential for other things to arise from the partnership
☐ The partnership is likely to make an impact on service provision in the community?
References


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