

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS IN
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

by

Allen W. Weeks, M.A., M.A.T.

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Committee Members:

James Koschoreck, Chair

Bergeron Harris

Jennifer Holme

Rolf Straubhaar

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Description |
|---------------------|---|
| AI SD | Austin Independent School District |
| CCS | Coalition for Community Schools |
| GACSC | Greater Austin Community School Coalition |
| SJCSA | St. John Community School Alliance |

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study is to examine how cross-sector partnerships can be used to support successful and sustainable Community School efforts. The Community School model is an increasingly popular school improvement and school turnaround strategy that depends on the support of a wide range of community partners. Two research questions are examined in the study: 1. How do different organizational cultures, including campus and school district cultures, affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives? In particular, how are the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships in community schools affected by the level of understanding that partners have of each other's cultures and the ability of partners to navigate cultural differences? 2. How do cross-sector partnerships supporting community school initiatives measure success? Using methods drawn from ethnography, the study interviewed seven respondents who had extensive experience in cross-sector partnerships and coalitions. Among other findings, respondents confirmed that cultural misunderstandings and disconnects do limit the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships. They also felt that coalition success is virtually impossible without an intermediary organization acting as a cultural bridge and translator, and that grassroots participation in partner coalitions increases the likelihood for successful outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to examine how cross-sector partnerships can be used to support successful and sustainable Community School efforts. The Community School model is an increasingly popular school improvement and school turnaround strategy that depends on the support of a wide range of community partners, including grassroots volunteers and activists, campus and school district staff, nonprofit and community organizations, businesses, higher education, and city, state, and federal entities (Dryfoos & McGuire, 2002; Frankl, 2016). While these partnerships offer enormous potential for supporting the needs of students, they also bring complexity and challenges to already over-burdened campus and district leadership (Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015). By studying the way that cross-sector partnerships have supported two campuses where the Community School model has shown promising results, and by examining the literature around other similar efforts nationwide, insights can be gained about what practices might support the successful integration of community-based resources and planning into Community Schools, as well as pitfalls that may limit that success.

Background

Over the past two decades, school improvement has grown as both a matter of discussion and an industry (Rowan, 2002; Daggett, 2014). A scan of school improvement strategies during that time shows that most approaches focus on the internal functions of schools: governance and leadership, curriculum and instruction, climate, and behavior (Brighthouse & Schouten, 2011; Texas Center for District & School Support, 2015). While recognizing the influence of external factors, such as local politics, parent

engagement, and access to adequate healthcare, on campus performance, external factors are usually seen as secondary to internal factors in how much they affect the academic success of students and schools (Gamoran & Long, 2006; Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Mehta, 2013). However, a growing number of school reformers, critical of current efforts, are working through a variety of disciplines to understand how external factors, including poverty, affect school achievement. Examples of this include Richard Rothstein's *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (2004) and Virginia Rhodes (2005) work on the effects of student mobility. The Community School model and other cross-sector approaches to supporting education, which take into account both internal and external factors, have focused on developing strategies based on the particular needs of the campus and community (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Lawson & Van Veen, 2016).

As defined by the Coalition for Community Schools, 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” (“What is a Community School?” 2016). While the roots of community schools can be traced to the one-room schoolhouse, the work of John Dewey and the Settlement House movement, as well as the Community Education movement in the 1930s, the resurgence in community schools (sometimes referred to as Full-Service Community Schools) since 1990 has leaned on the work of practitioners like Lisbeth Schorr, Adelman and Taylor of UCLA, and Joy Dryfoos, as well as organizations such as the Coalition for Community Schools, the Children's Aid Society, and the Netter

Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania. These pioneers and organizations all emphasize that systems connect schools, communities, families and supporting partners, and a well-functioning school must consider itself as part of larger systems (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Schorr & Smyth, 2009; Sherman, Trisi & Parrott, 2013).

The community school model is often seen as an umbrella of strategies aimed at reducing barriers to learning for students using coordinated student and family supports, which include high-quality academics, social and health services, quality pre-K programs, out-of-school time and extended learning opportunities, parent engagement and community partnerships (Dryfoos & McGuire, 2002; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Many community schools employ a shared leadership governance structure, with administrators inviting teacher, parent, student, and community participation in school improvement planning (Frankl, 2016; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018)

While one can point to a number of community school efforts that have shown promising academic gains, research on the impact of community schools has been done mainly in a piecemeal fashion, examining the impact of a particular element, such as early childhood education or parent engagement (Walker, Rollins, Blank, & Jacobson, 2013; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Little research has been done on community schools as a coordinated strategy, looking at the approach as a coordinated system of systems. (Jacobson and Shah, 2014). Also, the importance of governance models to the success of community schools, including shared leadership and the impact of cross-sector partnerships, has not been studied in depth (Anderson, 2009; Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015). Given that the community school model brings together a range of supports

that depend upon community partners as well as cross-sector support, the success and sustainability of these partnerships are vital for the success of the model. Some confusion in the research also stems from similar cross-sector approaches that may emphasize different elements or come out of different developmental streams, such as the collective impact model that has become popular in some cities as a way to organize cross-sector partnerships to support education and youth development. A recent working paper from the Wallace Foundation that examines cross-sector partnerships in education developed an ecology of overlapping but distinct versions of cross-sector and collective impact initiatives in education, with community schools as one of six types of similar initiatives. Both community schools and collective impact initiatives have formal national groups enforcing some level of consistency. Other types, such as Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools, are supported and defined by federal grants. Still others are more informal, such as school district or community-led collaboration efforts (Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015).

The limited research on cross-sector partnerships and shared leadership in community schools does show that bringing partners together to improve schools can be fraught with difficulties stemming from a number of sources, including differing organizational structures and priorities among partners, competition and trust factors (often involving funding), unclear roles and responsibilities, and political factors (Kania & Kramer, 2013; Boumgarden & Branch, 2013). According to Forrer, Kee and Boyer (2014), public institutions, including schools, “. . . must negotiate agreements with a variety of actors, with whom they may have little leverage or no direct control, but instead are connected through contractual or ad hoc arrangements in horizontal

relationships that involve the development of reciprocal trust and mutual accountability” (p. xix). Navigating this territory is challenging for campuses and communities, especially when the players include large institutions with different systems and expectations. (Anderson & Jap, 2005; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006)

Research about partnerships in community schools is also hampered by the variety of approaches schools take to organize, implement, and sustain this model. In scanning literature on community schools, as well as documents from the Coalition for Community Schools and the Institute for Education Leadership, large-scale efforts receive the most attention. These include the work of the Children’s Aid Society in New York City, the SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) network in Portland, Cincinnati’s Community Learning Centers, and the large-scale implementation of community schools by Arne Duncan when he was CEO of the Chicago Public Schools (Potapchuk, 2013; Henig et al, 2016). Organization in these efforts tends to be top-down, with high-level leadership teams directing strategic planning and funding initiatives. Intermediary organizations, often a nonprofit, health, or higher education entity, organize the work across groups of campuses, with local implementation done by a campus-level coordinator, who usually works with a site-based planning team. Literature produced by these organizations tends to reinforce conformity among the community school movement, with new local initiatives aspiring to implement what is essentially a complicated and expensive structure (Kania & Kramer, 2013; Thompson, 2014; Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015)

In contrast to these well-organized multi-level efforts are a number of grassroots community schools, often born out of crisis and organized by parent and community

volunteers. Some of these schools may use community school practices, but not call themselves community schools (Shirley, 1997; Warren & Mapp, 2011). These campuses may act as individual community schools or may influence practices on other campuses, as well as at the school district-level. Grassroots efforts may also result in systemic change and collaboration at a broader city or county level. In some instances, they have grown into collaborative funding efforts that obtain grants or other forms of sustainable funding. (Warren & Mapp, 2011; Frankl, 2015)

Researching the effectiveness of community schools, including the role that partnerships and governance play, is often comparing apples to oranges to papayas. Add to this the interest any school improvement model has in promoting its successes and hiding its failures, and it is clear that research on community schools is difficult and multi-dimensional. (Crowson & Boyd, 1996; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; Greene & McShane, 2018). It requires the ability to understand how organizational systems interact, including differing cultures and communication styles. (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Levi, 2014). Understanding the effectiveness of community schools also requires understanding the crucial role of leadership, both in schools and communities (Barth, 1991; Anderson, 2009; Hickman, 2016).

The case study I have chosen is unique in that it combines both grassroots organizing and high-level organization over an extended period of time. Webb Middle School and Reagan High School (now called Northeast Early College High School), located in Austin, Texas, both faced the crisis of school closure in 2007 and 2008. Grassroots school improvement efforts, based on community school concepts, kept both schools open. Today, these campuses continue to develop as community schools and are

thriving (with some caveats) both academically and in enrollment. They have also influenced district approaches to school improvement, as well as city, county and nonprofit leadership, resulting in the development of other community school efforts. Both Webb and Reagan have maintained grassroots participation, but they have also developed sophisticated social service systems and partner relationships and are part of a larger regional community school cross-sector coalition. (Dubin, 2015; Frankl, 2015). While the results have been promising, the process has not been without pain. Maintaining and continuing to develop authentic shared leadership has been a struggle, and some partnerships have worked better than others. Developing consistent funding streams and building data capacity to support coordinated social services has also been difficult. At the city and county level, attempts to deepen partnerships across health, workforce, early childhood, after school and social service sectors have uncovered the cultural divide between the way school districts and other public and private sectors function.

While 15 years of community school development stemming from the work at Webb and Reagan has produced laudable results, serious questions remain. Is the community school model embedded deeply enough in these campuses to be sustainable? If continued heroic efforts by community stakeholders were removed, would a culture of shared leadership continue? Can multi-level cross-sector partnerships and grassroots activism continue to exist side-by side, especially as the community school efforts become more sophisticated and driven by funding needs? Is this work replicable at other campuses and in other contexts? In many ways, Webb and Reagan are at crossroads in their journey, and this study will examine some of the challenges in the areas of cross-

sector partnerships and shared leadership that will need to be addressed to build sustainable efforts.

Of the many questions that could be addressed in this study, there are a few that are of special interest to me as an actor in this process of creating community schools. First, how do organizational cultures affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives? Nationally-recognized organizations advocating for community schools recommend bringing together partners from various sectors, including health, business, higher education, social services, workforce development, early childhood, and out-of-school time programs, as well as community-based organizations, nonprofits, faith-based entities, local government, and volunteer groups (Blank, Jacobson & Melaville, 2012; Dryfoos, Quinn & Barkin, 2005). Research on cross-sector partnerships, as well as experience in the schools that are part of this study, indicate that organizational and cultural gears do not mesh well between schools and partners, especially when those partners have large bureaucracies of their own (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Koschmann, Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012). For example, local government may wish to fund a program that benefits a local school or group of schools, but its funding cycle does not match the academic year, resulting in program gaps. A business partner wants to provide workforce training in the evenings at a community school but is prohibited from allowing students with criminal backgrounds from enrolling, due to school district policy. A healthcare partner offers to provide free physicals at campuses but finds that no one at the schools takes responsibility for getting required consent forms completed by parents, resulting in little use of the service. Recent studies have added to the research around collective impact efforts in education and have

confirmed that creating and sustaining beneficial partnerships is difficult for a number of reasons, including the types of problems referenced above. (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006; Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015). The impact of organizational cultures may be underestimated as a factor in the failure of partnerships to achieve sustainable success in supporting community schools (Koschmann, Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012; Hickman, 2016).

Answering this question requires us to think about the various levels at which cross-sector partnerships work in education. Achieving the goal of making sure that students have access to adequate healthcare may require working at the community, campus, school district, city, county, and even state levels, as well as working with existing multi-level health coalitions and collaborative structures. School districts themselves have their own sub-structures and comprehensive health planning approaches that may be disconnected from and unknown to the wider health community. It can be assumed that school leadership at both the campus and district level has little or no understanding and training in how healthcare, both public and clinical, is structured (Allensworth, Nicholson, et al, 1997; Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Even goal setting is a challenge. Do we look through the lens of the healthcare community, which may see children's health as a way of improving lifelong health outcomes, or the lens of the educators, which may see health outcomes as a way to improve attendance and academic performance (Gleason, Cicutto & Szeffler, 2016)?

A related question to the ways that cultural differences affect the success of cross-sector partnerships in supporting educational improvement is how well campus-level staff integrate cross-sector partnerships into their school improvement efforts through a philosophy of shared leadership. Many community school leaders describe shared

leadership as foundational to the definition of a community school and adopt shared leadership as the method for integrating the voices and resources that will help a school thrive. The vision and the reality, however, can be far apart. As Gary Anderson says in *Advocacy Leadership: Toward a Post-Reform Agenda in Education* (2009), there are many principals who implement inauthentic site-based management teams (a form of shared leadership) “. . . in a largely symbolic way” (p. 158). The difficulties Anderson describes involve sharing leadership among campus staff, without the added complexity of cross-sector and community partners. Even defining shared leadership at the campus level can be problematical, as a pilot study I did in preparation for this dissertation demonstrated. A principal, teacher and community partner were all asked to define shared leadership and describe how it functioned at their campus, where it had been promoted as the way collaboration was supposed to work. Responses showed significant variance in both the definition and description of shared leadership practice.

Another question is how cross-sector partnerships, which strive to develop shared goals for their work, measure success. This is perhaps a sub-question of the issue of organizational differences, but it is important enough to give it its own place in this study. In the era of collective impact, as well as school accountability and testing, setting performance measures and tracking success through quantitative means has become a religion for many (Mehta, 2013; Muller, 2018). While I will explore the difficulties associated with measurement in the literature review, it cannot be overemphasized that measurement can be helpful or it can become a barrier in itself. On one hand, when all community school efforts are tied to short-term academic gains on standardized tests by funders, partners can find themselves confused, disconnected, and even marginalized by

school administrators (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Schorr & Smyth, 2009; Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015). At the same time, multiple organizations, including the United Way, Ready by 21 and other large youth and family nonprofits and foundations, have worked to create shared youth-development outcomes that can be thoughtfully coordinated with educational outcomes. The Kellogg Foundation, over the past two decades, has also spread common language around logic models, including the use of outcome-based terminology that is used by the community school movement. Even well-intended efforts, however, can create barriers to collaboration. Particular planning models can favor institutional partners over grassroots stakeholders, including parents. Planning structures and terminology, developed in the social service arena, can create barriers that limit participation by stakeholders from other sectors, including education, business, and government. In general, school improvement planning developed in the context of accountability and testing is often disconnected (or even at odds) with the kind of social service planning promoted by Kellogg and others, making goal setting difficult for collective impact and cross-sector partnerships. Claiming causality can be especially problematical for community school initiatives with multiple partners, especially if outcomes are measured by test scores.

In sum, this dissertation proposes two questions:

1. How do different organizational cultures, including campus and school district cultures, affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives? In particular, how is the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships in community schools affected by the level of understanding

that partners have of each other's cultures and the ability of partners to navigate cultural differences?

2. How do cross-sector partnerships supporting community school initiatives measure success?

Either of these questions could be the subject of an extensive study. To limit the scope and focus this dissertation, I will focus on the first question about organizational culture, with the other question acting as a subset of the primary study. A case study will be developed of cross-sector community partnerships through interviews with key participants, using strategies and methods drawn from ethnography.

The study will be by necessity multi-theoretical, drawing from organizational theory, education, community organizing and community development, as well as other disciplines. Cross-sector partnerships are created along a spectrum from transactional (based on what we get from one another) to transformational (co-creating societal change) (Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans, 2010). Cross-sector partnerships, as applied to community schools, are *social* partnerships, with "societal outcomes prioritized from the outset" (Seitanidia, 2010). They can also be seen through various frames that highlight potential agreement and conflict. The frames, as described by Bolman and Deal in *Reframing Organizations* (2013) include the structural frame (organizational activities and strategic planning), the human resource frame (developing the capacity of employees and others who serve the organization), the political frame (decisions about resource allocation, use of power) and the symbolic frame (shared values, rituals and symbols by a community) (p. 19).

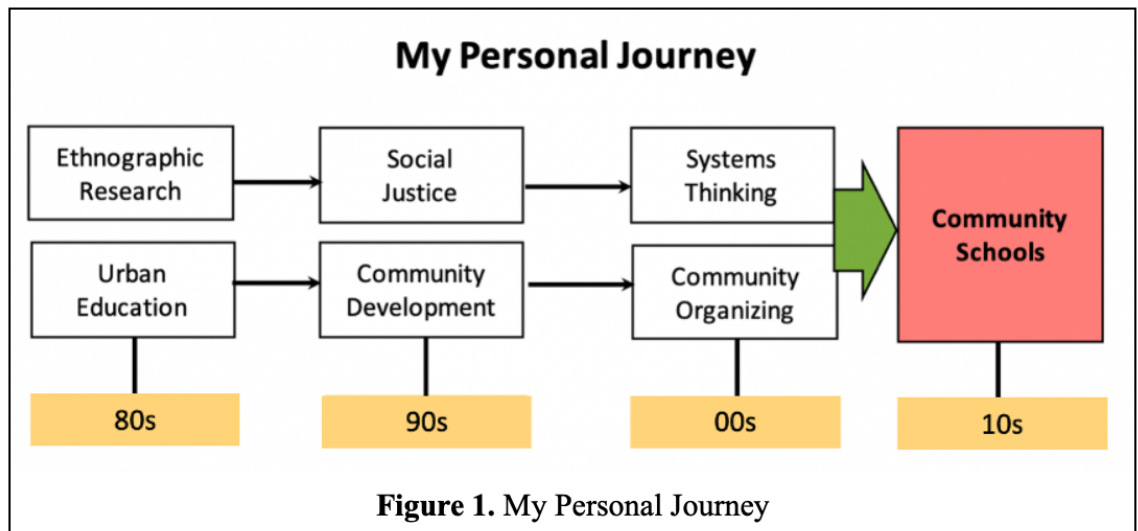
This case study uses a qualitative approach, employing interviews to gain insights into the experiences of partners and school staff working to support community schools. In particular, I will draw on the ethnographic methods developed by James Spradley, including the framework for developing ethnographic questions found in *Participant Observation* (1980), which cross-references ontological categories into a matrix of related questions. This framework, developed apart from any particular discipline or organizational culture, can serve as a neutral ground for the objective development of questions. For example, in crafting questions that cross-reference the categories “activity” and “space,” one might ask a partner, “Where do activities take place?” A grassroots partner might think about important activities taking place in the home, yard, or local meeting place. An institutional partner might think about important activities only occurring in a formal space, such as a conference room. Activities that are more informal spaces might be considered less legitimate, leading to certain partners being unwilling or unlikely to use or value spaces that would be considered important to a parent or community volunteer.

As a case study, the goal is to inform practice, both locally and nationally. Working as a participant in community schools over the past decade, I have seen the difficulty various sectors have in understanding how each other works, leading to many lost opportunities. I think this study will be able to raise awareness and perhaps inspire more research, as well as the development of tools that may improve the ability of various sectors to work together.

Personal and Professional Background

While I am not choosing to use autoethnography as my method, this dissertation

is highly personal, with myself and my wife deeply involved in the work that is the subject of this case study. An awareness of our background and personal journey will provide context for the reader, understanding that ethnography (even though this study does not claim to be a formal ethnography) is constructed meaning produced by an observer.



Certain milestones in my journey will help the reader understand my interest and involvement in community schools. In the early 1980s, I moved from teaching high school English at a suburban high school to an inner city alternative high school. The move was motivated by a growing involvement with social justice issues, as well as a realization that I needed to move out of my comfort zone. Over the next four years, I was mentored by a principal who understood community as well as the larger systems that affect kids. As one of the few white teachers at the school, he decided it would help my understanding of the neighborhood to make me the community liaison from the high school. This meant I needed to forge relationships and learn about a neighborhood that had once been a vibrant African-American community but was now struggling with

urban blight and the 80s crack epidemic. As I listened to local historians and long-time residents recount the rich history of the neighborhood, I became aware of the strengths that lay beneath the community's surface appearance. I also began to see the depth and diversity of the local culture, which I had lumped into one category: inner-city African-American. For example, I interviewed members at local churches, and found that they all served slightly different constituencies and had distinct histories. The two anchor churches in the community represented a key historical divide that still affected local politics. Ebenezer Baptist was founded by free black tradesmen and landowners decades before the Civil War, and still was the church of the educated and accomplished. St. Peter's Baptist Church, several blocks south, was founded by a missionary who evangelized the James River plantations before the Civil War. After emancipation, the church became a sanctuary for freed slaves, and still maintained that historical memory. These experiences helped me understand the importance of a community's history and culture as the foundation for social action, as well as understanding the importance of listening to people's stories.

One other influential aspect of the experience of teaching at the alternative high school was the creative design of the school, which brought together a vibrant adult education program that stretched from early morning to late at night with a last-chance program for high school dropouts, including those who had been removed from their high schools permanently. While there was a small high school completion program, most students were studying to pass their GED exams. Adults of all ages, including great-grandmothers, were mixed in classes with teenage gang members and students for whom school had never worked well. This was genius. Classes became multi-generational

families, with the senior adults able to enforce discipline much better than any teacher. Workforce training programs were also offered, and while not every student made it through, many found their way to the GED Spring graduation ceremony. Without knowing it, I was experiencing my first community school.

In 1985, towards the end of my time teaching at the alternative high school, an opportunity arose to do research overseas. As my social justice interest had grown, I was looking for new opportunities to learn and serve in other cultures, and I was about to embark on an adventure that would affect me deeply. A university on the West Coast was offering a graduate semester focused on learning how to do ethnography. One option for study was in southern India, and in August 1985, I found myself, along with six others, in a five-week training course, preparing for three months of intense research in a large Indian city. Our assignment was to produce an ethnography focused on an under-researched subcaste group. Our work was based on the techniques of James Spradley, one of the pioneers of ethnography, and his books *Participant Observation* and *The Ethnographic Interview* (which still have places of prominence on my bookshelves today). Over that semester, I had one of the most difficult and rewarding experiences of my life, spending many long days engaged in interviews with people, gaining insights that few outsiders have the privilege of knowing. Perhaps the most valuable lesson, in addition to learning the genius of how Spradley designed his questions and constructed knowledge in a way that preserved the integrity of the informants, was that insights come slowly, but they come. Ethnography demands patience and care, and is truly an art, allowing constructed knowledge to reveal itself. Much qualitative work, based on a few focus groups, interviews, or surveys just scratches the surface and forces knowledge into

pre-set categories. The experience I had in India showed me the amazing power of waiting for informants to set the categories, to give them the time and space to reveal some aspect of how they see the world.

Over the next several years, I would live in or do projects in several countries, including the U.K., Pakistan and Cameroon, involved in education, community development and social justice work, born out of a deepening connection with my personal religious faith. In 1998, I moved to Austin, Texas and soon found myself living in the St. John community, Austin's lowest income and highest crime neighborhood. I had no clear plan, except that I knew from past experience that, despite appearances, this was a neighborhood with vibrant African-American and Hispanic cultures, as well as a rich history. Whatever happened, it would be a good place to live. I soon had a job in educational technology with Apple and was assigned to support school districts throughout Arizona. This had me commuting back and forth, traveling extensively among the Navajos, Apaches and Hopis, as well as suburban, urban and rural school districts. The disconnect between the poverty I saw on some days and the shiny plastic boxes I was peddling to school districts (often paid for through federal grants), was jarring, but it also brought me into the emerging school improvement conversations beginning in the early 2000s. Much more than computers, I found myself involved in deep conversations about the future of native-American children, and where the promise of technology might fit in that equation, which produced in me a healthy skepticism about the "latest and greatest" in education reform. The ethnographer in me was always awake, listening for insights such as when one young man, now back on the Navajo reservation as a high school teacher, told me about how his tech job in Phoenix, while paying well, was not enough to

keep him there. “I couldn’t stand the noise. I need the sound of the wind.” Who would have thought that sound was more important than money?

In 2002, after four years at Apple, I had had enough of plastic boxes and decided to pursue my interest in south Asia by entering a master’s program in Asian Studies at the University of Texas. For the next four years, I studied Urdu, worked alongside mainly Muslim students and professors, and traveled to Pakistan to do research on traditional education. Again, I found myself in another cultural setting, listening and learning about the vast differences of experiences encompassed under the umbrella term “Muslim.” This was in the years just after 9/11, and the Muslim students in my classes openly discussed the struggles they felt in reconciling their various identities. My experiences on several research trips to Pakistan highlighted for me the difference between the violent culture described in the news, and the country that I saw on the ground. My interest in philosophy, which had begun in high school and continued through undergraduate and graduate school, was also being fed, as I found myself in the soup of academic postmodernism. Daily discussions of the “other,” related to but different from Hegelian dialectic theory (which actually absorbs the other), had practical implications for my classmates. Noam Chomsky, who I knew as a linguist, now became a hero to my classmates for his political activism, and I saw the house of mirrors that uninformed social justice efforts could produce. I also saw the value as well as the danger found in endless postmodern discussions of language and power. Simply labeling an area as “the Far East” was an exercise in power, as billions of people were moved from the center of geography to the fringes.

By 2004, I had a standing job offer to teach English literature at a Pakistani University. My wife Julie and I married in late 2003, and she joined me in St. John. Julie had been a nurse in West Africa for four years, and was a brilliant and fearless advocate for the marginalized. By Spring 2004, we were pregnant with our first child, and a difficult pregnancy prevented us from moving to Pakistan. Instead, we decided to put our energies into St. John, looking for ways to fit in. The neighborhood had a long and largely unrecognized history of community organizing, and within two years, we found ourselves supporting 19 block leaders. Our work was informed by the asset-based community development principles out of Northwestern University, as well as membership in a network of mainly African-American and Hispanic churches focused on community development and neighborhood transformation. We also came into contact with Ernesto Cortes and local Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) affiliate, from whom we learned much about community organizing.

For a short time, we were part of a community development nonprofit, but mainly worked over the next six years as community volunteers. Julie formed a health network for two zip codes, bringing together public and clinical health providers to talk about ways to improve care in strategic ways. I completed my Asian Studies work, worked as a graduate assistant in philosophy at UT, and volunteered in the local St. John area schools. We both continued organizing in the community, including developing a large resource fair called HopeFest. In 2006, we began a monthly partner meeting to support our neighborhood schools called the St. John Community School Alliance. By 2007, the Alliance and St. John received recognition from America's Promise Alliance, founded by

Colin and Alma Powell, as one of the “100 Best Communities for Youth in America.” Webb Middle School was even featured on the “Today” show.

All this seemed preface to what would occur in January 2007, when we were informed, at a packed evening meeting, that Webb would close due to three years of missing state standards on standardized tests. On one hand, we were being told by a national organization that the community was doing great, and on the other hand we were being told, very directly, that the community did not deserve its own middle school. Visions of “orientalism” and otherness came home, as we listened, in a predominantly African-American and Hispanic crowd, to a white superintendent explain the logic behind the closure. With the level of organizing already present in the community, we were able to fight back quickly and stop the closure, but more importantly, we took the crisis as an opportunity to move to the center of the conversation about how Webb worked (or didn’t work) for the children it served. Using community organizing principles, we gathered teachers together and interviewed all of them, asking why Webb was struggling and what possible ideas they might have for improving the school. One thing they were clear about was that, in three years, they had never been asked for their ideas by the district or the Texas Education Agency, which had full-time monitors on site. It was an eye-opener to me, as a teacher, that teachers had been pushed to the periphery of the school improvement conversation as other voices, including consultants and bureaucrats, had gained power in the age of testing and accountability.

Through these interviews, we learned that Webb was incredibly unstable and mobile, with 10% of the students at any one time homeless, and 1/3 of the school highly mobile. Because of external housing issues, student would enroll in as many as four

schools each year. While the district insisted that external family and community problems were beyond their control, we knew that these community issues could be mitigated through collective efforts. We led the formation of a team of 30 partners and organizations to create Austin ISD's first Family Resource Center (FRC), focused on increasing family stability. The FRC became the centerpiece of a community-generated school improvement plan that was approved by the AISD Board of Trustees for use at Webb. A team of 21 stakeholders, including parents, teachers, the school principals, myself and several district leaders, refined and implemented the improvement plan. The community formed partnerships to support the FRC, including obtaining a bilingual social worker from the City of Austin for two years, while we looked for funding to sustain the FRC. Within a year, academic improvements were evident as barriers to learning for students were reduced and the climate of the school improved. What we didn't know (until we attended a Coalition for Community Schools national forum in Portland, Oregon in 2008) was that we had created a community school that aligned to national standards. We learned that many others, over a period of decades, had used the same common-sense principles: listening to school's stakeholders, leveraging community assets, and creating an encouraging and positive environment in which a school could thrive.

Over the next several years, these same processes would be repeated at Reagan High School and Eastside Memorial High School, which were also slated for closure. Joint planning efforts between community stakeholders would work to solve complex problems. We also learned the value of having campus leaders who were open to collaboration and shared leadership. Especially at Reagan High School, the community

school philosophy thrived under Principal Anabel Garza, who empowered those around her to be solution-focused and collaborative. We have found, however, that shared leadership is a difficult feat to create and sustain over many years as participants change and institutional forces cause slow drift back into old patterns.

What can help mitigate against institutional drift is systems-level change, as well as the development of habits and traditions. We have tried to create simple structures that are repeatable and eventually become “the way things are always done.” Good examples of this are our monthly community school alliance meetings, which are now held in four different Austin communities and follow similar agendas, as well as the large community resource events that we have developed, which follow set planning formulas. At the city level, we have experimented with creating collective impact groups that cut across sectors to support community schools. Our first effort was in 2010, when we created a large team to support a federal Promise Neighborhood grant application. We had all the “important” people on board, from city, county, United Way, large nonprofit, education and business, and we learned important lessons about what not to do. Fortunately, our team was not successful in getting a Promise Neighborhood grant, which allowed us to step back and learn from our missteps.

Much of what we learned will be discussed in the literature review and the methodology section, but in short, we underestimated the difficulties of forming a successful collective impact effort that would also stay true to the grassroots nature of our work. Hard lessons were learned about the competitive nature of the nonprofit world, as well as the lack of understanding different sectors have of one another. Federal grants, based on the community action model prevalent in the 1960s, continue to promote

programs with a per recipient cost (or “dollars and dosages” as one nonprofit colleague put it) as the engine for change, rather than process or system change. (Zeitz, 2018). This programmatic orientation flows down from foundations and funders to service providers, pushing collective impact groups towards short-term thinking. Julie and I, however, had witnessed community development in developing countries, where your primary resource is not money but the people around you. You look at the assets you have in the community, including the skills and passions of community members, as well as existing programs, and find ways to leverage all of these into sustainable change. This orientation towards community development and community organizing forms the basis of our passion for leveraging and coordinating existing partners, systems and processes in order to make them function as a problem-solving engine. To us, this is what community schools are about and why this dissertation is being written. How can we take what we have and do things better? How can we take overlapping and duplicative programs and align them with the specific needs of communities and schools? How can we overcome the cultural barriers and lack of knowledge that keeps schools from connecting with the rich resources in their communities?

We have seen some measure of success over the past 15+ years of work in Austin but know that we are just beginning to change systems and build habits and traditions that will reorient our schools and communities into an effective team of partners to support the needs of all children.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since school desegregation began in the 1960s and 1970s, education has been one of America's frontline strategies for solving issues of social and economic inequity (Zeitz, 2018; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Half a century later, despite numerous strategies, including an intrusive nationwide system of testing and school accountability, gains have been slight in basic literacy and numeracy, as well as higher-order critical thinking skills among low-income minority youth (Berliner, 2009; Ravitch, 2011; Petrilli & Wright, 2016). The result is an ever-increasing wealth and career divide, as some children have access to schools and higher education institutions that provide a pathway to economic success, while others face limited upward social and economic mobility (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Coley & Baker, 2013). A scan of many of the school improvement models shows that most are focused on areas internal to the functioning of the school: governance and leadership, curriculum and instruction, and climate and behavior (Rowan, 2002; Mehta, 2010; McDermott, 2011; Coley & Baker, 2013). While researchers and practitioners may recognize the influence of factors external to schools on student academic success, including poverty, family life and access to social supports, these factors have been seen as either beyond the control of the campus, or as having less impact on school improvement than curriculum, instruction and school leadership (Berliner, 2009). It is clear, however, that focusing on academic factors, without taking into account external factors that affect children is leaving millions of youth with unaddressed needs that interfere with their academic success. Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA refer to these needs as "barriers to learning," which can be both internal, stemming from the student and the school, or external, stemming from the family and

community (2006).

This literature review focuses on a school improvement framework called community schools which seeks to take into account both internal and external factors that affect a child's ability to succeed in school. In contrast to academically-oriented school improvement models that focus solely on internal school factors, the community school model seeks to find a balance between addressing academic and non-academic factors (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Benson, Harkavy, Johanek, & Puckett, 2009). In particular, external factors are addressed through the development of partnerships, many of them from outside the education sector, which bring needed resources to the community school to address health, housing and other barriers to learning. While partnerships may bring resources, they also bring complexities that challenge campus systems which are usually not designed support and integrate multiple and diverse partnerships (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015; McDaniels, 2018).

Community School practitioners address the problem of complexity through the strategy of “coordination,” a term that is at the heart community school improvement planning (Dryfoos, Quinn & Barkin, 2005; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). A staff member, usually referred to as a community school coordinator or resource coordinator, is designated to organize service coordination. While having a point person for coordination is a starting place for integrating cross-sector partnerships into the school, coordinators quickly find themselves overwhelmed by culture, capacity and systems issues that are often beyond their scope of control (Campbell-Allen et al., 2009; Adelman & Taylor, 2017). Some community school initiatives have sought to address this problem through using an “intermediary” agency or institution that is experienced in creating and sustaining cross-sector partnerships across

multiple campuses (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2005; Warren & Mapp, 2011). Community school advocates reference larger, well-funded community school initiatives as evidence of the success of using an intermediary agency as a strategy to deal with the complexity of community school partnerships (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012; Frank, 2016). However, recent studies have also pointed out the difficulties newer community school initiatives have had in developing sustainable cross-sector partnerships (Henig et al., 2016).

One of the difficulties faced by community schools developing cross-sector partnerships is that partners come from different organizational and social cultures (Bartelt, 1998; Lawson & Van Veen, 2016; Henig et al., 2016) Education, healthcare, housing, business, higher education, municipal government, nonprofits, faith-based institutions, and community organizations all have their own ways of working and seeing the world (Boyd, Crowson & Gresson, 1997; Pescosolido and Aminzade, 1999). Much of the literature on developing successful cross-sector partnerships encourages the development of shared vision and norms to address these differences (Rubin, 2009; Wolff, 2010; Forrer, Kee, & Boyer, 2014) While this advice may be helpful, it does not adequately address the challenges schools and partners face in developing effective ways of working together to support the needs of children.

This study, born out of over a decade of on-the-ground work developing community schools and associated community partnerships, uses ethnographic and case study methodology to examine the various ways that cultural differences impact the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships in supporting community schools. In particular, the study uses constructivist/grounded theory to draw conclusions from interviews, surveys and artifacts,

with question design and ethnographic methodology drawn from James Spradley and his participant observation framework (Spradley, 1979; Spradley, 1980). In addition, the study draws insights from social psychology (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), organizational theory (Bolman and Deal, 2013; Schein & Schein, 2017), sociology (Lewin, 1997; Hachen, 2001; Smith, 2005), social anthropology (Geertz, 1973) and research on school culture (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015).

Poverty as a Factor in Educational Attainment

The relationship between poverty and educational attainment is well-documented (Coleman et al., 1966; Ferguson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane, in *Whither Opportunity* (2011), bring together a number of studies documenting achievement gaps based on income. Richard Rothstein's *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (2004) and Virginia Rhodes' research (2005) on the effects of student mobility also document the negative effects of non-school factors, including poverty, on student performance. However, school reform literature over the past decade has tended to ignore the significance of external factors tied to poverty, such as student mobility or lack of access to healthcare. Brighthouse and Schouten (2011) note that the U.S. Department of Education's *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2007-12* ". . . mentions few factors outside the control of schools as causes of educational disadvantage, and its strategic focus is relentlessly school-based" (p. 508). Leading nonprofit education reform funders, including the Gates, Broad and Walton Foundations, focus exclusively on school-based reforms in their funding initiatives, ignoring critical external factors in their planning (Brighthouse & Schouten, 2011). A recent review from the Wallace Foundation called

Putting Collective Impact in Context documents the “. . . debate between those who believe educational improvement requires attention to out-of-school factors and those who believe schools can and must make substantial progress on their own” (Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015).

Researchers examining the connection between poverty and student academic achievement follow a number of different areas of inquiry, including: 1. Measurements used to track child poverty and its relationship to academic achievement (Coley & Baker, 2013; Petrilli & Wright, 2016); 2. The mitigation of certain causes of poverty, including housing, unemployment, access to healthcare, immigration status, crime, and racial or cultural bias (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005); 3. The physical, emotional and social effects of poverty on children and learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Nelson & Sheridan, 2011); 4. The funding of programs intended to improve outcomes for children in poverty (Sherman, Trisi, & Parrott, 2013); 5. The relationship between housing segregation and decisions regarding school attendance areas in maintaining or reducing poverty (Reardon et al., 2012; Rhodes, 2005); 6. The relationship of community organizing and community development in high-poverty areas to school improvement (Warren & Mapp, 2011); and 7. Correlating the relationship between poverty and popular school reform practices, including testing and accountability, school reconstitution and school choice (Ravitch, 2011; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Working in all of these areas means crossing disciplines, including the social sciences, economics, medicine and public policy, and using both quantitative and qualitative methods of study. Perhaps the difficulty of working across disciplines has contributed to the lack of research on the effects of poverty on academic success, relative to the vast literature focused on school-

based reforms (Brighthouse & Schouten, 2011; Henig et al., 2016).

As stated earlier, a basic tenet of community schools is that student success is influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. These factors can be described variously as barriers to learning, conditions for learning, and opportunities for learning. (Coalition for Community Schools, 2005; Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017)

Barriers to learning: Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor of the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA describe a variety of “barriers to learning,” which can be both internal to the student and the school, or external stemming from the family and community (2006). According to community school advocates, barriers to learning external to the school include inadequate housing and family mobility, poor access to healthcare, food insecurity, conflict and trauma in the family and community, un- and underemployment, financial instability and cultural barriers (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Nelson & Sheridan, 2011; Sherman, Trisi, & Parrott, 2013). Students may also experience “biologically determined disorders/disabilities/ illness, slow maturation, and individual differences” (Adelman & Taylor, 2017, p. 2). The school itself may erect barriers to learning through poor instructional programs or a lack of supports for language and cultural needs. Adelman and Taylor also emphasize the “ongoing transaction of person and environment factors” (2017, p. 2). While labeling a student may be convenient shorthand for a school, the interplay of factors from home, community, school and person may demand a more complex understanding of a student’s needs.

For instance, Virginia Rhodes (2005) has written extensively on the relationship between student mobility and academic performance, showing that a highly mobile

student whose family is unable to maintain stable housing may have to rebuild relationships with teachers and other students multiple times during a school year. Highly mobile students may also miss more school, with gaps between leaving one school and entering another. Students with special needs are especially vulnerable, with services continually interrupted (Schafft, 2006). Without both internal and external support strategies addressing interconnected barriers to learning, a school will see little success serving students facing these challenges.

Conditions for Learning: Closely aligned to the idea of reducing barriers to learning is looking for ways to improve conditions for learning. Reducing barriers is more student-centric, focusing on the negative factors that stand between a student and academic success. Improving conditions for learning strategizes more broadly about the school and community factors that may positively influence the success of all students. The Coalition for Community Schools, in a white paper entitled *Community Schools: Promoting Student Success: A Rationale and Results Framework*, identifies six conditions for learning (2013):

1. High-quality early childhood development.
2. A core instructional program with qualified teachers, and challenging curriculum with high standards and expectations.
3. Engaged students during and after school.
4. Basic physical, emotional and social needs of students and families are met.
5. Respectful collaboration between parents and school staff.
6. Engaged community working with the school to build a safe, supportive and respectful school climate.

Achieving any one of these conditions presents significant challenges, especially for

under-funded and unstable schools in low-income communities. For example, two recent studies found that high-poverty schools had more difficulties filling teacher vacancies than their counterparts with fewer low-income children, and that high-poverty schools had a higher share of first-year teachers and teachers new to their school district. (García & Weiss, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2018). Community schools believe that only by leveraging community resources and building advocacy and coordination strategically through partnerships can sustained improvements in these conditions for learning be achieved. (Dryfoos , Quinn & Barkin, 2005; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012)

Opportunities for Learning: Finally, community school advocates use an equity lens to compare access to extended learning opportunities for students coming from different communities. In one neighborhood, families may be able to pay for their children to take part in sports, fine arts, youth leadership, and other learning activities. Children may have access to college tours and even study abroad programs. In another neighborhood, these same opportunities may have to come through free parks and recreation programs, after school and summer camps offered at schools, and a myriad of other programs supported by nonprofit organizations, community partners, and municipal funding.

Community schools see access to these opportunities, which also include academic, enrichment, fine arts, and programs that prepare students for success in college and career, as fundamental to achieving equity. Unfortunately, with standardized testing defining what is and what is not important for schools to prioritize, many of these learning opportunities are seen as add-ons, to be supported haphazardly and treated as afterthoughts (Owen, 2010; Jacobson, Jamal, Jacobson, & Blank, 2013).

Community Schools as a Strategy to Address Poverty

As defined by the Coalition for Community Schools, 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” (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020).

The community school model’s roots, including its focus on ameliorating the effects of poverty on student learning, can be traced back to the 19th century, when schooling was seen as a way of addressing societal issues (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Benson, Harkavy, Johaneck, & Puckett, 2009). Ideological ancestors of today’s community school movement include Jane Addams and her work at Hull House in Chicago in the late 1800s, widely recognized as the beginning of the social work movement in America with its emphasis on the interconnectedness of social problems and solutions, the Progressive Movement of the early 20th century with education reformers focused on social reconstruction, including John Dewey with his idea that schools as a “social center” of our democracy. In addition to the basic functions of primary and secondary education, schools began to be used for other purposes that supported the community, including as health centers, adult education sites and art galleries (Mott, 1993; Dryfoos, 1994).

In the 1930s, Charles Steward Mott, a co-founder of General Motors, began working with Flint, Michigan’s Director of Physical Education and Recreation, Frank Manley, to establish a local club for boys. Rather than constructing a new building, Manley suggested using existing school buildings during non-school hours. Thus began the modern community school movement, with adult education and community activities filling the buildings at all

hours, seven days a week. By 1935, Flint had five community schools, and eventually all of Flint's schools were designated community schools (Benson, Harkavy, Johanek, & Puckett, 2009). Manley had learned community education concepts at Michigan State Normal College and incorporated innovative ideas that are fundamental to community schools today, including a community school coordinator for each campus, coordination of community partner agencies and the formation of community school councils to involve community members in the governance of their schools (Quinn & Young, 1963). With the help of an editorial by Eleanor Roosevelt about the work in Flint, thousands of visitors began coming annually to take the community school model back to their own schools.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, Charles Stewart Mott, through the Mott Foundation, funded university-level community education training programs around the country to grow a cadre of leaders for the community school movement (Miami-Dade County Public Schools Community Education, n.d.) . The movement also gained support through progressive initiatives, including school nursing and health programs, which gained funding under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. President Johnson's Great Society efforts to reduce poverty also brought funding to community school priorities, through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which created programs like Head Start and Upward Bound (Zeit, 2018). Finally, the 1960s and 70s saw a new wave of immigration, bringing many children and adults into schools needing basic social services and adult education. 1968 saw the passage of the Bilingual Education Act, offering the first federal aid to support English language learners. Two new national organizations, the National Association for Community Education (NACE) and the National Center for Community Education (NCCE) were able to lobby successful for federal community schools legislation in 1974, which provided funding through 1981 (Campbell-Allen et al., 2009).

The 1980s and '90s produced new funding streams to support community school initiatives at both state and federal levels. Agencies and organizations such as Communities in Schools, the Coalition for Community Schools and the Children's Aid Society emerged as leaders in the community school movement. Federal funding sources, including Title 1 and the Full-Service Community Schools Act, encouraged growth in after-school programs, adult education and health services. Jane Quinn of the Children's Aid Society reported that federal 21st Century Schools funding for after school programs grew from \$40 million in 1997 to \$453 million in 1999 (Dryfoos, 1994; Campbell-Allen et al., 2009).

Over the past 15 years, the Coalition for Community Schools has emerged as the clearinghouse for various community school strategies and programs. Coalition partners include a large number of foundations, education organizations, social service agencies, after school and youth development programs, higher education institutions, state and local education and government entities, and policy, training and advocacy groups (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020; Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). Since the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, community school strategies that can meet the standards of "scientifically based research" have benefited from increased funding and attention, while others, including more complex strategies that involve multiple interwoven programs, have suffered (Schorr & Smyth, 2009; Murnane & Willett, 2011). As disillusionment grows with high-stakes testing and associated school reforms, with promised gains failing to materialize, community schools have emerged as an important alternative model, with support from national education advocates, including the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE)

(Darling-Hammond and Weingarten, 2014; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

The community school model is often described as an umbrella of strategies aimed at reducing barriers and improving conditions for learning. Strategies include providing wraparound support services for families, academic, social and emotional supports for youth, parent and community engagement, early childhood learning and out-of-school time programs (Schaffer, 2001; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Potapchuck, 2013). Research focuses on the impact of each of these as discrete strategies rather than the community school model itself, possibly because of the U.S. Department of Education's definition of evidence-based interventions focusing on individual programs (Schorr & Smyth, 2009; Muller, 2018). A presentation by the Institute for Educational Leadership on community school evaluation found that some evidence exists for the effectiveness of various community school programs, but little research has been done on community schools as a coordinated strategy (Jacobson and Shah, 2014; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Many of the strategies connected with community schools have gained wide acceptance in American schools, including pre-K and early childhood programs, adult education, after school and summer programs, and coordinated student health services (Henig et al., 2016; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). According to research from the Coalition for Community Schools, approximately 5,000 schools nationwide identify themselves as community schools, adopting one or more community school strategies, though this number may be outdated (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020; Quinn & Blank, 2020). Some school districts have adopted community schools as a framework across multiple neighborhoods or even district-wide, including Austin, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, New York, Oakland, Portland (Oregon), and Tulsa (Frankl, 2016; Henig et al., 2016; Quinn & Blank, 2020). While most national school improvement or

school turnaround consultants have not used community school strategies in their frameworks, a few well-known, including Mass Insight, Talent Development Secondary (created by Johns Hopkins University) and Turning Points (a middle school reform program created by the Center for Collaborative Education) have recognized the importance of community partnerships and social services in supporting struggling schools (Center for Collaborative Education, 2001; Mass Insight Education, 2011; Johnston et al., 2020).

While community schools use a common framework for ameliorating the effects of poverty and improving academic outcomes for students, individual schools may adopt different programs and emphasize different parts of the model, depending on the needs of the school and the assets available in the local community (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012; Frankl, 2016). Local community school initiatives fall along a spectrum, with some schools emphasizing wraparound supports and enrichment programs and others focused more on community engagement, organizing and advocacy. (Warren, 2005; Frankl, 2016). Full-service community schools, as described by Joy Dryfoos (1994), focus on service partnerships that deliver and coordinate wraparound services (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). In contrast, grassroots school reform efforts such as those influenced by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in the 1990s and early 2000s have focused on using community organizing to develop parent leaders and inclusive school improvement planning. Mark Warren (2005), in his writing on urban school reform, proposes three models of community schools: a service model, exemplified by full-service community schools; a new school development approach, where community members advocate for a charter or other new school model; and a community organizing model, such as that used by IAF-affiliated schools. Schools using the full-service community school model focus on well-coordinated student and family supports delivered

through collaboration between professional partners (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). Community schools developed through community organizing use inclusive planning processes to improve their schools but are not engaged in long-term delivery of support services (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Over the past two decades, community schools have increasingly blended both approaches, combining robust support models and community-based planning that brings parents, teachers and community partners to the table to develop school improvement strategies (Dubin, 2015; Frankl, 2016). This blended approach can be seen more recently in community school frameworks published by the Chicago-based Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools and the National Education Association (Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, 2016; National Education Association, 2018; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018).

Types of Community School Initiatives: At present, there is no agreed upon typology for different kinds of community schools. Community schools may be referred to as full-service community schools, university-assisted community schools, community hubs, community learning centers, and internationally, as extended-service and multi-service schools (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). In some districts, where the term community schools may carry political baggage or is used to refer to charter schools, community schools may be called wraparound schools or community learning centers.

Agreement about what elements are needed to become a community school is also missing. The Coalition for Community Schools website includes resources from different time periods that conflict on how programs and strategies are categorized. A recent report published by the Learning Policy Institute has gained traction among community school practitioners with a four-pillar model (integrated student supports, expanded learning time, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices) (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel,

2017). Other models, including those produced by the National Education Association, Coalition for Community Schools, and the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, group programs and strategies differently, including curriculum, high-quality teaching, workforce development and wraparound supports for families in their models. The LPI report's authors admitted that their four-pillar model was created more as a way to evaluate the evidence base for community schools than to be proscriptive for how to implement the community school model in various contexts. In fact, the authors go on to describe a number of conditions for learning, including high-quality teaching, effective and relevant curriculum and positive school climate, that are necessary for the four-pillar model to be successful (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017, pp. 12-15). Perhaps the best approach for capturing the variety of programs and strategies used by community schools has been developed by the Coalition for Community Schools, using the smartphone as a metaphor. The coalition states:

Most people think of schools today as serving a single purpose: a binary, analog-system of delivery-teachers teach and students learn. Community schools are more akin to smart phones. Schools and communities connect, collaborate, and create.

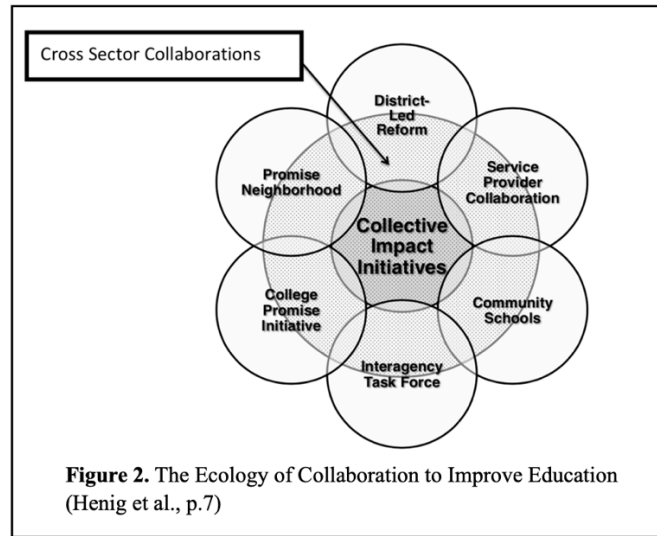
Children and families have an array of supports from community partners right at their school. Communities and schools leverage their shared physical and human assets to help kids succeed. (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020)

The Coalition goes on to list various “apps,” including engaging instruction, expanded learning opportunities, college, career and citizenship, health and social support, community engagement, early childhood development, family engagement and youth developed developed as examples of programs and strategies that a community school might adopt. Extending the metaphor further, they use the idea of the operating system that synchronizes

and coordinates the apps to describe the role of the coordination by a community school coordinator and site leadership team.

As for a typology of community schools, one could distinguish single-school vs. multi-school or even district-wide initiatives, efforts that are top-down, organized by school districts, citywide coalitions or large nonprofits vs. those that emerge from grassroots efforts, initiatives that begin as the result of grant funding vs. those emerging with little or no funding, community schools using the full-service model vs. those that are more academically-focused, and community schools led by campuses or school districts vs. those led by intermediary organizations (Dryfoos, Quinn & Barkin, 2005; Warren & Mapp, 2011; Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). These are just some of the ways that community schools could be classified, and this dissertation may, using ethnographic methods, be able to contribute a taxonomy that is helpful in the national conversation around defining and understanding various kinds of community schools.

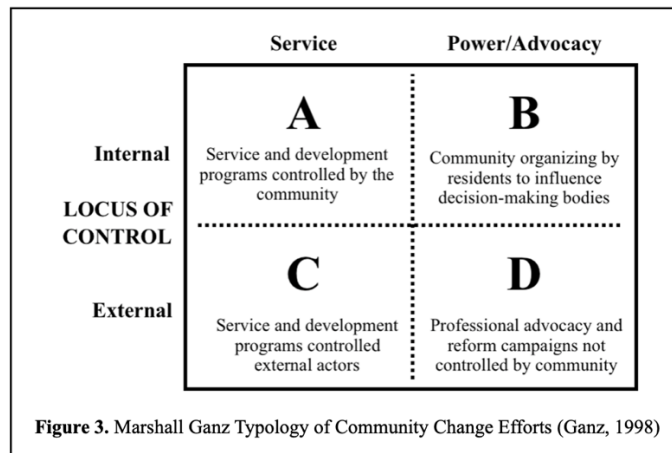
Two existing typologies may also be helpful in distinguishing types of community schools. The Wallace Foundation, in their report *Putting Collective Impact in Context: A Review of the Literature on Local Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Education* (2015), views community schools as a type of collective impact effort, with some shared characteristics with other collective impact education models. It should be noted that the term “collective impact” is used sparingly in literature about community schools, which tend to use terms like cross-sector collaboration, partnerships, and coordination. The Wallace report uses the following to illustrate the various kinds of collective impact education models:



The illustration shows each of these approaches sharing some parts of the collective impact model, as well as other elements in common, including a dependence on partnerships to support educational success and formalized cross-sector collaboration. The illustration also makes the point that each model has distinctives not found in the other models. In order to provide some boundaries around their study of education-oriented collective impact initiatives (which would result in a review of over 150 initiatives in 2016), Henig et al. (2015) lists six baseline characteristics necessary for their study: initiatives are locally organized, they are large scale (more than one school), they are cross-sector, they include the school district as a major partner, their outcomes are education-focused, and they are formally structured (as opposed to ad hoc or short-term) (p. 6).

Douglass Hess of Grinnell College has written extensively on the history of community development and community organizing and has developed a typology focused on where the locus of control lies for any approach to community change, including community schools (1999). The concept of locus of control was originally developed by psychologist Julian Rotter, a pioneer of social learning theory, to distinguish between the effects of internal

and external motivation on behavior (1966). Marshall Ganz from Harvard's Kennedy School adapted Rotter's model to distinguish four types of interventions common to community change efforts: service delivery, community development, professional advocacy and community organizing. These can be illustrated as follows:



Simply by using this illustration, one can see the spectrum of community schools, with grassroots efforts developing services and advocating for educational change shown in blocks A and B, contrasted with community schools run by school districts and large intermediary organizations shown in blocks C and D.

Hess explains the history of Community Development Corporations (CDCs), which emerged out of 1960s-era Great Society social programs (Zeitz, 2018). These pilot efforts, focused on both urban and rural poverty, were supposed to be led primarily by the recipients of services. In some cases, such as the Highbridge Community Development Corporation in the Bronx and the CDC in Lawrence, Massachusetts, CDC were able to manage the tension between service delivery experts and grassroots leadership (Mandell, 2009). However, many CDCs abandoned community participation as they aspired to make move the needle on housing and other conditions of poverty. CDCs that had strong ties to national funders demanding results worked almost exclusively with municipal agencies and had weak ties to

the communities they served (Hess, 1999; Henig, 2016).

In the 1990s, Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs), as well as full-service community schools, emerged as ways to reconnect with communities while increasing needed resources and services. Foundations and federal grants supported pilot projects. More detail about CCIs and their relationship to the development of community schools is presented later in this chapter, but of note here is the typology that Hess develops to compare the CCIs to other community change strategies. Hess uses five “bases” or categories for comparing community organizing, community building, community developing, and Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) as community change strategies:

1. Primary Value of Practice: The value that is at the center of community change efforts. Hess identifies three options- participation (everyone participations in decisions affecting their welfare); expertise (rational decision making leading to professional implementation); and leadership (who takes responsibility for getting things done).

2. Conception of Public Interest: The public interest or desires of the community can be identified through expertise (singular); the community comes together to define and work on public interests (communal); and the community can have various interests or subgroups (conflicting).

3. Power: Hess’ contrasts three kinds of power in community change projects. Pluralism simply means gathering community to hammer out concerns, assuming that the community has access to decision makers. Agenda setting means that a community has the power to force decision makers and bureaucratic systems to pay attention and act on their concerns. Agenda planning means adding the capacity, often missing in oppressed or weak communities, to identify their concerns.

4. Social Capital: Hess identifies three different kinds of social capital used by community change practitioners. These include internal social capital (building community relationships), collaborative social capital (bridging and forming relationships across communities, including race, class, geography and other divides) and political social capital (leveraging social capital to produce change, which may have unintended consequences of privileging one group over another).

5. Civic Engagement: Civic engagement can be generalized, involving residents in a number of ways focused on building trust and social networks. It can also be aimed at developing political activists and policy makers, involving residents on committees, boards and other action teams.

Table 1. Douglas Hess Comparison of Community Change Strategies (Hess, 1999)

| Bases | Community Organizing | Community Building | Community Developing | Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| Primary Value | Participation | Leadership | Expertise | Expertise and Leadership |
| Nature of Public Interest in a Community | Conflicting | Communal | Singular | Communal and Singular |
| Power | Agenda Setting | Agenda Planning | Pluralist | Pluralist and Agenda Planning |
| Nature of Social Capital | Political | Internal | Collaborative | Collaborative (weaker on internal) |
| Nature of Civic Engagement | Political Activism | Engaged Citizenry | Policy Making | Policy Making (weaker on Engaged Citizenry) |

Other taxonomies have been proposed to organize collaborations between cross-sector partners that address social issues, oriented towards progression from a less-committed to more-committed levels. The National Center for Community Schools (2011), a training institute created by the Children's Aid Society in New York, describes community schools as exploring, emerging, maturing and excelling, with each stage moving (sometimes in a non-

linear fashion) towards more formalization of cross-sector partnerships and systems development (pp. 33-4). This is similar to the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) structure used by many health-oriented coalitions, which describes stages of development: formation, maintenance and institutionalization, operating in a cyclical fashion (Butterfloss & Kegler, 2002; Osmond, 2008). Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans (2010) developed a continuum of community engagement, moving from transactional to transitional to transformational. Transactional, in an education setting, might simply be a business providing a donation to a campus with some sort of public recognition. The schools receive the benefit of the donation and the business receives public good will. On the other end of the spectrum would be cross-sector collaborations that aim to transform some aspect of society and have positive effects on partners. Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) developed a similar taxonomy, with organizations that barely relate on one end of the spectrum to organizations that have merged authority and capacity on the other end. The middle ground, where partners coordinate work, share information and do other forms of collaboration, is where they would place most cross-sector partnerships (p. 44). Aidman and Baray (2016) describe a collaborative continuum used by a nonprofit collaborative that includes five phases of development: communication, cooperation, collaboration, shared services, and merger (p. 266). John Donahue (2004) proposes a list of criteria that can be used in developing a taxonomy of cross-sector initiatives, including formality, duration, focus institutional diversity, network density (which he refers to as valence), stability vs. volatility, shared initiative, and problem-driven vs. opportunity-driven (pp. 3-4).

Given that there is much discussion among community school practitioners about the

relationship between service delivery/wraparound supports and community organizing/shared leadership, Hess' typology, as well as those proposed by other researchers may be of help in understanding the cultural landscape of service providers, schools and communities involved in the cross-sector partnerships examined in this dissertation.

Community Schools in the Context of National School Reform Strategies

The elements and principles espoused by community schools can be found in many, if not most, of the public schools in the U.S. There is common agreement that parental engagement is valuable, that after school programs should be offered, and that a variety of student support services should be present, especially in schools serving low-income students (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Less common but still talked about, especially by teacher unions, is the value of shared leadership between teachers and administrators (Anderson, 2009; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Some districts offer robust adult education programs and have dedicated campuses serving as hubs for community activities. Other community school ideas, such as having a staff member dedicated to service coordination and the development of community partnerships, have not yet gained popular acceptance. Schools may or may not identify as community schools, even though they have adopted many of the elements of the framework. A small subset of schools are part of district, city or region-wide community school efforts to organize and coordinate as collective impact-style initiatives (Henig et al., 2016; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

Hal Lawson and Dolf van Veen also clarify that most, if not all, school in the U.S., Europe and other regions have instituted student support services, typically using response to intervention (RTI) and/or school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)

strategies to organize their efforts. Since these kinds of supports are hallmarks of community schools, it begs the question, “Aren’t all schools community schools?” Lawson and van Veen clarify an important difference between community schools and non-community schools, which is the recognition that factors beyond the boundaries of the school have a significant influence on student success. Only by collaborating with community health, social service and other partners can a school begin to handle the larger issues of poverty, including high mobility, access to healthcare and hunger that are found in schools where low-income students are concentrated. They refer specifically to “comprehensive service system designs” (2016, p. 81) that partner with the community to build systems of care for both children and families.

The concept of community schools, however, has not been seen until recently as a comprehensive model for school improvement, and by extension school turnaround, a term applied to persistently low-performing schools as determined by state test scores, dropout, and graduation data (Kutash et al., 2010; Frankl, 2016)). Districts receiving funding for school turnaround efforts, or who are under state sanctions for low academic performance, may be mandated by state and federal agencies to adopt a limited number of school improvement strategies, most of which are highly disruptive to already unstable campuses (Rice & Malen, 2010; Cumpton, 2015). In fact, the term “disruptive” has been a favorite word used by many school-reform advocates, arguing that tweaking the status quo does not produce the change necessary to reform persistently struggling schools. The approaches these advocates have recommended include closing a school and moving students to other campuses, repurposing the school into a new model, such as a magnet school, reconstitution, which will be considered at length below, and transferring the campus to a charter school organization. (Ravitch, 2011; Sims, 2018). In some cases,

more incremental reforms have been allowed, such as the small learning community approach supported by the Gates Foundation, which has had limited success. (Shear et al., 2008).

Since the 1960s, school leaders have searched for replicable and scientific approaches to school reform (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Mehta, 2010; Muller, 2018).

Although *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, which became the national approach to school reform in 2002, claimed to come from a positivistic framework based on evidence-based practices, school policy and school improvement practitioners knew that it was rife with ideology, organizational beliefs (and pseudo-beliefs), and power politics (Mehta, 2010; McDermott, 2011). Within five years of the passage of *NCLB*, states began instituting harsher sanctions for low-performing campuses than those mandated by the federal law (Fusarelli & Cooper, 2009). In particular, Colorado and Texas, two states with strong charter school advocates, passed laws that mandated school closure based on test scores and opened the doors for charter school takeover of campuses. These states also adopted reconstitution of schools, which mandated the firing of the campus principal along with a significant percentage of school staff, as an intermediary turnaround model to be used as a step before school closure (Rice & Malen, 2010; Ravitch, 2011).

Understanding how reconstitution, a practice with little evidence of success, became a nationwide and widely mandated practice affecting millions of students, is revealing, especially when compared to community school reforms which have shown evidence of success over a period of decades (Cumpton, 2015; Frank, 2016).

Reconstitution of schools had its roots in San Francisco in the early '80s. The local school superintendent, Robert Alioto, was negotiating a court-ordered desegregation

order. He proposed drastic changes in campus staffing at schools affected by the court order, along with significant investments in resources and facilities, terming his proposed reforms “reconstitution.” Six schools were involved in the initial reconstitution effort, which included a national search for highly-qualified principals and teachers, reductions in class size, increased planning time and professional development for teachers, and a redesign of instructional materials and services (Rozmus, 1998). Later phases of the San Francisco reconstitution plan provided fewer resources, and the overall academic results were mixed at best (Rice & Malen, 2003).

Despite the lack of positive results, the concept of reconstitution spread to a number of other cities by the 90s, including St. Paul, Chicago, Baltimore, Cleveland and Houston (Finkelstein et al., 2000; Mintrop, 2004). Reconstitution was enshrined as a recommended strategy for school improvement in *No Child Left Behind* in 2003 and in federal school turnaround grants for persistently low-performing campuses in 2009. In 2010, the National Education Association published a paper collecting empirical studies of reconstitution efforts nationwide, finding that reconstitution was a “risky” strategy that had either marginal or negative effects on most campuses (Rice & Malen, 2010). In fact, the only example where reconstitution had shown some measure of success was in the initial San Francisco effort, where, under pressure from the court, a large investment in resources was made by the district, supporting a variety of school improvement strategies (Rojas, 1996; Fraga et al., 1998).

The NEA study concludes that, while the goal of reconstitution is to “improve the stock of human capital and create an arrangement that makes more productive use of that human capital,” it ends up being counter-productive over time (Rice and Malen, 2010, p.

9). In the short term, reconstitution (and the threat of reconstitution) may result in a burst of short-term activity aimed at improving test results. This includes teachers working longer hours and substituting longer-term teaching priorities for short-term test-taking strategies. In the long term, however, reconstitution results in a depletion of the stock of human capital, with the departure of teachers committed to the campus and the reticence of other teachers to work at a campus under sanctions. Reconstitution also weakens social networks that benefit school improvement, both because of the turnover of teachers and the stressful atmosphere that reconstitution creates (White and Rosenbaum, 2008).

One of the core beliefs underpinning reconstitution is that there exists a pool of high-quality teachers available to move to struggling campuses. This belief has no basis in fact, and studies over the past 15 years have borne out the riskiness of reconstitution. The question then remains that if empirical studies have shown that reconstitution is not a strategy with a successful track record and that it has obvious negative effects, why is it still used as a key tool to address struggling schools nationally? (Mehta, 2010; Henig, 2013).

From a critical standpoint, one can go back to the politics underpinning reconstitution in San Francisco. In that case, the San Francisco Unified School District was looking for a dramatic solution with a high level of district financial commitment as a response to desegregation demands from the courts. In other words, reconstitution started out as an answer to institutionalized racial practices in a particular school district, not as an evidence-based school improvement best practice (Goldstein, Kelemen and Koski, 1998). The irony, which was soon realized nationwide, was that principals and teachers of color bore the brunt of removal from campuses adopting reconstitution as a

strategy. A recent study from UC-Berkeley and the National Educational Policy Center addresses the way reconstitution, along with other drastic school reform measures, including school closure, reduced opportunities for teachers of color and introduced a form of organizational racism (Trujillo & Renée, 2012).

Reconstitution also perpetuates the idea that there is always an “other” that will do better work than the current staff and leadership. Who is this “other”? If test scores are the measure, then higher-quality teachers would be predominantly in schools in higher-income communities, which would be mostly white (White & Rosenbaum, 2008; Rice & Malen, 2010; Reardon et al., 2012). If the quality of higher education institutions from which teachers are drawn is the measure, once again this implies that better teachers will come from predominantly white universities. Organizations like Teach for America, which recruit heavily at Ivy League and other prestige institutions, serve to perpetuate this elitist conception of teacher quality (Lapayese, Aldana & Lara, 2014). Opponents of reconstitution, including those who teach in schools that are under pressure from drastic reform measures, talk about the value of having teachers who have cultural and neighborhood connections to the students as more important than either test scores or the zip code of one’s bachelor’s degree (Trujillo & Renée, 2012).

Communities are pushing back on top-down strategies like reconstitution, school closure and mandated charter takeovers with community-based strategies, including community schools, that are tailored to each school and each district. While research around the success of community schools in producing sustained school turnarounds is in its early stages, case studies have demonstrated that comprehensive community-based efforts can produce significant turnarounds in academic achievement (Warren and Mapp,

2011; Frankl, 2016). The Center for Popular Democracy published a report entitled *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools* in 2016 that highlighted ten case studies of schools that had used community school strategies to achieve sustained improvements in academics, attendance and school climate. In 2017, the Learning Policy Institute examined both the efficacy of individual components, as well as the community school model as a comprehensive approach to school improvement. Their report, entitled *Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement*, gathered evidence that could be used for school districts and states applying for funding through the *Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. The four areas of practice that LPI examined were integrated student supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. While the U. S. Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)* has very little in the way of evidence-based programming in these areas to support school improvement, LPI brought together a number of studies that showed the benefit of significant investment by schools in these practices, as well as the added benefit of using a comprehensive community school approach employing multiple coordinated strategies. (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017)

Issues of Power in Community Schools

The Role of Grassroots Participation in Community Schools: While the community school movement is well-known for its focus on coordinated student and family supports, adult education and providing a hub for community partnerships, the model is also associated, especially in recent years, with grassroots school reform efforts. Major education organizations and coalitions, including the National Education Association (NEA), American

Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) have adopted the community school model as a democratically-based school reform design that contrasts with education privatization efforts, which are branded as corporate-funded ventures meant to wrest control of education away from local communities (Ravich, 2011; Warren, 2014).

Mark Warren is a prolific writer examining the intersection of community organizing and school improvement, especially in struggling schools and communities. In *A match on dry grass: Community organizing as a catalyst for school reform* (2011), he describes three models of education reform: a service model, similar to the full-service community school approach; a development model, where a community designs or affiliates with a charter school or other innovative-governance model to create a new school; and a school-community organizing model, where parents and community gather to plan reforms and use political means to develop partnerships. Warren discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each model, and sees the charter model as the least sustainable, in that it isolates a small group of motivated parents into one school, rather than working to transform the local educational system. Warren recommends blending the strengths found in the service and community-organizing models. In fact, providing services for families can increase involvement of local parents and community members in school transformation, and community organizing can result in increased resources and supports for schools. Warren is rare in that many community school researchers come from either a service provision or community organizing background and are uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the other's culture. In fact, community organizers influenced by the principles promoted by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) may resist offering services to struggling families as a violation of the "iron rule," which says, "Don't do for others what they can do for themselves." (Dobson,

2012). However, this reflects a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Iron Rule, which was to leave room for new organizers to gain experience, and more experienced organizers to act in a supportive role.

Shared Leadership as a Core Principle in Community Schools: Building a community school that reflects the thinking of both campus and community involves understanding how shared leadership, as a concept in education, intersects with community organizing and collective impact practices. Studies of local community school initiatives demonstrate how important both effective shared leadership practices and developing effective cross-sector partnerships are to the success of the project (Frankl, 2016; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). According to Pearce and Conger (2003), shared leadership in an education context is defined as moving away from a hierarchical or positional model of leadership, and instead adopting a relational model, with any member of a team able to influence outcomes through the exercise of leadership (pp. 1-2). While the term shared leadership has become broadly used in organizational theory, contextualizing it within schools means understanding how a variety of stakeholders, including campus and district administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students, community partners and community residents can work together to improve schools (Pittinsky, 2009; Rubin, 2009; Wassenaar & Pearce, 2012).

Much of school reform practice over the past two decades has been strongly influenced by top-down solutions, exemplified by the Gates Foundation school redesign funding and U. S. Department of Education Race to the Top grants that forced struggling schools into a narrow range of pre-determined school turnaround choices. However, initiatives such as full-service community schools (Dryfoos, Quinn, and Barkin, 2005), the Industrial Areas Foundation Alliance Schools (Shirley, 1997), and the Pritchard

Committee for Academic Excellence programs in Kentucky focused on parent engagement and leadership development (McDonald and Keedy, 2004) have embraced shared leadership as a central tenet of school reform, involving parent and community stakeholders in devising and implementing school improvement strategies.

Alma Harris, in *School improvement: What's in it for schools?* (2002) describes the power of shared leadership in school improvement planning:

Both external and internal change agents generate capacity for change by assisting schools in setting developmental priorities and taking appropriate actions. They are catalysts within the developmental process and offer a particular form of leadership. This leadership is essentially a process of constructing knowledge through the interaction of both the external and internal change agents Leadership is about intervention and change; it is not about position or authority. In successful school improvement, leadership is a distributed activity that is premised on gaining collective knowledge and understanding (p. 65).

The starting point for shared leadership, according to Harris, is not decision-making but rather the practices of listening, understanding and constructing shared knowledge. Pre-determined school improvement models that do not grow out of the soil of particular schools and communities are similar to what Paulo Friere refers to as “banking,” with knowledge “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (2000, p. 72). At its most authentic, shared leadership in a community school is, as Harris states, “a process of constructing knowledge through the interaction of both the external and internal change agents” (2002, p. 63).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) use the term “distributed leadership,” defining it as

a way of sustaining change focused around “. . . a compelling and inclusive moral purpose. It is a shared responsibility, which benefits future generations . . .” (p. 97). It should be noted that different authors use shared leadership, distributed leadership and collective leadership to describe the practice of involving multiple stakeholders in planning and decision-making (Goksoy, 2016). While many writers on community schools promote shared leadership as a way to involve stakeholders in the early planning stages of school reform, Hargreaves and Shirley think about how to sustain a culture of shared leadership over time. A lack of sustainability in collective impact efforts, including community schools, is a weakness pointed out in a Wallace Foundation study, *Putting collective impact in context: A review of the literature on local cross-sector collaboration to improve education* (Henig et al., 2016). Hargreaves and Shirley point out that American and British models of accountability have had the negative effect of making stakeholders less responsible for results. They offer Finnish schools as a counterexample, where a “culture of trust, cooperation and responsibility” underlies school improvement (p. 102). They also propose that distributed leadership increases the appreciation of differentiation and diversity in the classroom, in contrast to the standardization of curriculum that popular accountability and testing models support. This appreciation of differentiation and diversity benefits schools by creating curriculum and conditions that are more engaging for both students and teachers, thus making schools more responsive to the changing needs of students and their changing communities (pp. 106-107). While hierarchical models of leadership might see difference and dissent as a problem, a shared or distributed leadership model values “critical friends,” who can see the school from different viewpoints (Harris, 2002, pp. 58-60;

Warren, 2011).

Many schools are experimenting with some form of shared leadership, perhaps in the form of professional learning communities, but its growth is limited by the demands of state and district accountability. As Gary Anderson states in *Advocacy Leadership: Toward a Post-Reform Agenda in Education* (2009), there are many principals who implement inauthentic site-based management teams (a form of shared leadership) “. . . in a largely symbolic way” (p. 158). Anderson goes on to reflect that stakeholders, including principals, need to construct an agreed-upon definition for shared leadership and shared democratic processes. Constructing meaning together around this concept can help school and community partner teams develop more authentic practices. A small number of schools have experimented with significant levels of autonomy for teachers, forming shared leadership teams that have the freedom to innovate, while still meeting the overall demands of accountability (Warren, 2005; Farris-Berg, Dirkswager, & Junge, 2013).

Shared leadership is also a way to build organizational capacity by expanding the ways that the roles and functions of leadership are conceptualized. Bolman and Deal, in *Reframing Organizations* (2013), propose four frames that effective leaders work within. These include the structural frame (organizational activities and strategic planning), the human resource frame (developing the capacity of employees and others who serve the organization), the political frame (decisions about resource allocation, use of power) and the symbolic frame (shared values, rituals and symbols by a community) (p. 19).

Community schools lend themselves naturally to this multi-faceted view of leadership and organizations. A traditional hierarchical view of leadership might focus solely on the structural frame, with strategic planning, processes and systems as key elements, and

might secondarily spend time on the human resource frame, developing selected staff for leadership development. The political frame might only be thought of in terms of damage control and marketing. The symbolic frame would barely be an afterthought, with little consideration for how shared culture and diversity impacts the success of the schools. Community schools, by contrast, value all four frames described by Bolman and Deal, understanding that shared leadership involves seeing the strengths, challenges and opportunities inherent in systems, people, politics and culture (Warren, 2005; Rubin, 2009; Frankl, 2016)

Shared Leadership and Cross-Sector Partnerships: Shared leadership in community schools goes beyond the campus to include community partners from diverse cultures and different functional domains (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Pittinsky, 2009; Rubin, 2009; Henig et al., 2015) Various terms, including cross-sector collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, partner coalitions, partner networks, cross-boundary leadership, networks of responsibility and collective impact networks are used in community schools to describe the working relationships between a wide range of partners, from grassroots volunteers and small organizations to large corporations, healthcare providers, universities and regional nonprofits (Dryfoos, Quinn & Barkin, 2005; Henig et al., 2015) At the most basic level, cross-sector collaboration can be defined as “an alliance of organizations that together have a role in solving a problem and achieving a shared goal” (Gold, 2018, April 16). Mitchell & Shortell (2000) define cross-sector partnerships as “voluntary collaborations between public and private agencies and community stakeholders who are focused on a shared interest.” While cross-sector collaborations to support education have gone through many iterations over the past 40 years, there

continues to be interest and investment in local, place-based cross-sector collaboration as a strategic approach for the improvement of educational outcomes and communities (Henig et al., 2016). In particular, federal grants (including full-service community schools and Promise Neighborhoods) and the growth of collective impact initiatives over the past decade, along with advocacy from the Coalition for Community Schools, National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, have all motivated cities across the U.S. to engage in cross-sector education work (Potapchuck, 2013; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

Partnership teams consisting of campus, nonprofit, local government, business, higher education, healthcare and community stakeholders are a central part of the the community school model. The Coalition for Community Schools (2006) refers to these teams as practicing “cross-boundary leadership” and building “networks of responsibility” (p. 1). Teams leverage resources, including funding, to support both academic and non-academic needs. They also help connect schools with health, workforce, housing and other local networks, creating the potential for common goal setting around positive outcomes for youth. Increasingly, these local efforts are being linked into national networks, such as Strive (a collective impact network), the Coalition for Community Schools, Ready by 21, and national community school cohorts sponsored by the National Education Association. (Dryfoos, 2002; Rubin, 2009; Jacobson & Blank, 2015; Henig, 2016)

Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, in the Wallace Foundation report *Putting Collective Impact in Context*, differentiate the various kinds of partnerships established to support schools as less formalized and more formalized. At the less formalized end of the

continuum, education-focused cross-sector collaboration happens as a matter of course, with groups joining together to sponsor an event, provide a service, or contribute occasional input for campus planning. Participation is episodic and formal agreements between partners are lacking. At the other end of the continuum are highly organized, large-scale cross-sector collaborations involving multiple government entities and community partners committed to agreed-upon educational and social outcomes. Participation is over a period of years, and formal agreements are in place that enumerate roles and responsibilities. As the authors examined research studies, including case studies examining the impact of educational partnerships, they found that researchers lacked “. . . a threshold of scale and institutionalization to distinguish small scale and periodic efforts from those that are more substantial and institutionalized” (2015, p. 5). Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff caution that judging the relative merits of cross-sector collaborations without such a definition leads to applying the same standards for success to less-formalized volunteer community-based efforts as one would apply to highly-funded and well-staffed coalitions.

Oakland Unified School District in Oakland, California is a leading example of a school district that has worked to embrace both less formal and more formal partnerships, depending on the needs of the campus and the partner. In 2010, OUSD’s superintendent, Tony Smith, worked with the school board to develop community schools as a district-wide strategy (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012). Smith tapped into existing relationships with the county public health department, local foundations, after school and other service providers to formalize and strengthen partnerships at selected campuses, rolling out a phased plan to expand community schools. A multi-tiered

partnership process and agreement was created to formalize partnerships, allowing space for a wide range of partner commitments and needs. OUSD recognized that some partners were occasional volunteers and did not need facilities and data-sharing agreements. Other partners wanted to grow their capacity to work in schools and needed to meet insurance and background check requirements to work on campuses. A smaller group of partners wanted to be involved in intensive campus and district planning, required data sharing agreements for program evaluation, and could potentially be funding partners. While most public school districts have a process in place for partners, OUSD's focus on partners as part of a district-wide community school strategy displayed an attention to the needs of partners and blending cultures that strengthened trust between the district, campuses and community (Rubin, 2009; Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012; Fehrer et al., 2016).

Other large community school initiatives, including SUN (School Uniting Neighborhoods) Community Schools in Portland, Oregon, Children's Aid Society community schools in New York City, Family League of Baltimore community schools, and Cincinnati Community Learning Centers, have all developed processes and structures over many years to coordinate multi-faceted partnerships. All of these initiatives use an intermediary organization as a bridge between service partners and school districts, as opposed to OUSD, where the district coordinates with partners directly (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012). SUN community schools is particularly complex, housed under the Multnomah County Department of County Human Services, and coordinating stakeholders including the City of Portland, Multnomah County and six school districts, with 90 schools and service sites. Funding for SUN is contributed by multiple entities,

with over 20 large nonprofits, city and county agencies, as well as various coalitions and higher education institutions, providing services and participating in network planning (Multnomah County, n.d.).

Children’s Aid Society (CAS) has operated in New York City since 1853 and is a leader in building coalitions to reduce poverty through youth and family programs. CAS established its first community school in 1992 in the Washington Heights Neighborhood of New York City, using the full-service community schools model. Since that time, they have been the intermediary agency for 21 community school located in New York City’s poorest communities (Lubell, 2011). On its website, CAS states that “Since 1994, the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS, a program of CAS) has assisted in the establishment of nearly all national and international community school initiatives, involving more than 15,000 schools in total” (Children’s Aid, n.d.). CAS was also one of the three founding partners of the Coalition for Community Schools in 1998, and was a key partner in the expansion of community schools to 100 campuses through New York City’s Community School Initiative that began in 2014 (Johnston et al., 2020).

The Coalition for Community Schools recommends the intermediary model for efforts that are “scaling up,” which they define as growing from a handful of community schools to a community-wide system of community schools. The Coalition’s *Scaling up school and community partnerships: The community schools strategy* guide explains:

An individual community school lays the foundation for success; just ask any child, family, teacher, or community partner who is a participant. The challenge is to extend the community schools logic-and the conditions for learning-across school boundaries so that all children and their families in a

community may benefit. When schools and community partners take steps to link individual community schools into coordinated systems, the systems become the building blocks of a fully engaged child- and family-centered community (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011, p. 8).

The guide goes on to discuss a systems approach and structures to support shared leadership, stating that “Most initiatives have developed a collaborative leadership structure that helps them execute and integrate key functions system-wide Typically, the structures connect community-wide and site-level leadership, often through an intermediary entity (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011, p. 13). The following diagram shows three centers of shared leadership:



The diagram itself displays some of the problems inherent in community school shared leadership designs. Many large school districts, including Oakland, Chicago and Houston, have created large community school initiatives using district funding and organizational structures, but the CCS diagram places the district as a member of a community-wide leadership team, on equal footing with nonprofits, government agencies

and other interested partners. The reality is that school districts are usually the main source of funding for community schools, have authority over local campuses and district policy, and have goals, including those handed to them by state and federal agencies, that may not align with those of other community school partners (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Rubin, 2009; Henig et al., 2015). Districts may also have multiple approaches to community schools operating simultaneously, with some emerging from grassroots community groups or teacher unions, some contracted to service providers by the district, some directly managed by the district, and others created through short-term grant funding, such as Promise Neighborhood or Full-Service Community Schools grants (Henig et al., 2015; Johnston et al., 2020). The CCS model also assumes agreement about who might be the intermediary organization or team, which will assume significant authority over the project. In reality, competition between organizations may result in multiple intermediaries or none at all. Issues of governance and organization are compounded by the voluntary nature of most coalitions (Alexander, Zuckerman, & Pointer, 1995). The CCS model may represent an ideal, but it often does not match the reality on the ground, where funding, governance, competition, changes in campus and district leadership and local politics may take precedence over systems-building efforts by a community school collaborative (Boumgarden & Branch, 2013).

The difficulties inherent in scaling up community schools are confirmed when we look at the relationships between nationally-recognized large community school initiatives in Cincinnati, Portland, Baltimore and elsewhere, including Austin. All of these well-established community school cross-sector initiatives also have local collective impact organizations supporting education, built on the national Strive

collective impact model that originated in Cincinnati, but none of the community school efforts are closely aligned with their collective impact affiliate, even though they share common goals and language. The Cincinnati community school work (called community learning centers in Ohio because of the use of community schools to refer to charter schools) has received national attention, with Oyler School, a PK-12 school in Cincinnati's lowest-income community, featured on "60 Minutes" and the subject of a documentary film, *Oyler: Dramatic Turnaround in a Poverty-Stricken Community* (Scott, 2019). However, a 2014 Harvard Business School Case Study of Strive Cincinnati (which leads a national network of collective impact initiatives supporting education) fails to mention the Cincinnati community learning centers and their extensive partnership coordination through cross-boundary leadership teams. The study states that, "The (Strive) Partnership was founded (in 2006) on the belief that educational outcomes could improve beyond what the public school district could do alone by addressing the full range of a child's other needs-nutritional, medical, social, etc." (p. 1). The study goes on to point out the lack of any entity coordinating services at schools in Cincinnati, but by 2006, the Community Learning Center efforts were well under way, with significant city and private foundation funding (Grossman, Lombard, & Fisher, 2014; Scott, 2019). In Portland, All Hands Raised is the multi-county collective impact organization affiliated with the Strive Network. Neither the All Hands Raised website, nor the website for SUN Schools (affiliated with the Coalition for Community Schools), mentions the other initiative, even though both claim to be leading in the same community schools space and share many of the same partners.

There are obvious disconnects if similar large-scale citywide or regional cross-

sector education initiatives in the same geography can have similar goals, work with many of the same partners and funders, and yet work separately. This begs one of the research questions being explored in this dissertation, which is how different organizational cultures affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives. Henig, Reighl, Houston, Rebell and Wolff, in their 2016 nationwide scan of cross-sector collective impact education initiatives, found 182 initiatives meeting their definition of local cross-sector collective impact collaboratives.¹ They limited their scan to the 100 largest cities in the U.S., meaning that some smaller cross-sector initiatives may have been missed. 47% of the initiatives (85) were affiliated with a national education or collective impact network. In particular, 49 groups affiliated with Strive Together, 18 were Promise Neighborhood federal grantees, 11 affiliated with the Coalition for Community Schools, 5 were part of Alignment USA (an outgrowth of Alignment Nashville) and two were part of the Say Yes to Education network (Syracuse and Buffalo, New York). 97 initiatives indicated no affiliation with a national or regional network (p. 26).

The report claims that, “One of the rationales for establishing cross-sector collaborations is to reduce the fragmentation, duplication, and intergroup competition for resources that some observers believe is contributing to internally inconsistent and

¹ For the purposes of their survey, Henig et al. used the following definition: “Cross-sector collaborations for education were identified that met specific criteria. They were place-based, with evidence of being organized and led at the city, school district, and/or county level. They included the participation at top leadership levels of at least two sectors: the education sector (including early childhood education providers, K-12 systems, and higher education institutions), the general-purpose government sector (such as a mayor’s office or a municipal department of health and human services), and the civic sector (including the local business community, nonprofit service agencies, and local foundations). They focused on educational outcomes and had school system officials playing an important role, albeit not always in a formal leadership position. The search process yielded 182 collaborations with functioning websites, and these constitute the set for the scan” (Henig et al., 2016, pp. 17-18).

potentially wasteful efforts (Henig et al., 2016, p. 27). They found, however, that over half of the 182 collaborations were in places with at least one other large-scale education collaboration, and 12% of the total were in cities with four or more groups. Los Angeles, for example, has at least six large collective-impact education, alongside numerous neighborhood-based efforts.² In Austin, Texas, the report lists the E3 Alliance, a member of the Strive Network, as well as Ready by 21, part of the national Ready by 21 network. While there may be good reasons for having more than one local collective impact education initiative (splitting up a large geography into more manageable areas of focus, for instance), more common reasons include the founding of new initiatives to supersede or even compete with older ones, opportunities for major funding, including federal grants, requiring the establishment of a new collaboration, the inability of local education leaders to navigate power and relational issues leading to fragmentation, and disagreements over core school reform strategies, including charter schools and community schools (Hess, 1999; Huxham & Vangen, 2005 ; Ravitch, 2011; Henig et al., 2015).

In contrast to the limited number of highly-organized and well-funded community school efforts that work across whole districts or large urban areas, many community schools initiatives are either single campus projects or exist without an organizing infrastructure or intermediary organization providing support and training (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Lawson and Van Veen, 2016). Typically, each school has a staff member called a community school coordinator, resource coordinator, wraparound

² Collaborations in Los Angeles include the Los Angeles Education Partnership, Partnership for Los Angeles, Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood (Youth Policy Institute), Los Angeles Fund for Public Education, Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative and the L.A. Compact (Henig et al., 2016, p. 27).

specialist or similar title to recruit partners and volunteers that provide services and resources for the campus. Most partnerships tend to be informal (as described by Henig in the Wallace Foundation study), working without partner or data sharing agreements. Relationships are often transactional, with the partner viewed as a source of support, and the school sometimes fulfilling some sort of need on the partner's end, such as meeting a grant requirement or providing volunteer opportunities (Rubin, 2009; Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012, Henig et al., 2015).

Whether community school partnerships are part of large, citywide efforts or are centered around one particular campus, practitioners are still faced with the cultural and communication challenges that reflect the differences between various sectors, including health, workforce, nonprofit, higher education, foundations and government. According to Forrer, Kee and Boyer (2014), public institutions, including schools, “. . . must negotiate agreements with a variety of actors, with whom they may have little leverage or no direct control, but instead are connected through contractual or ad hoc arrangements in horizontal relationships that involve the development of reciprocal trust and mutual accountability” (p. xix). Navigating this territory is challenging for campuses and communities, especially when the players include large institutions with differing systems and expectations.

While there is extensive literature on distributed leadership in an educational context (Pearce and Conger, 2003; DuFour, et al., 2006), there is less research on the ways that schools share power and decision-making with communities, including the development of cross-sector partnerships in schools (Lawson and Van Veen, 2016; Warren and Mapp, 2011). Much of the research is in the form of case studies that

illustrate the challenges of such partnerships (Bringle and Hatcher, 2002; Adams, 2010; Pacyna, 2014). A case study of community school efforts in Austin, Texas did show promising practices around building successful cross-sector school and community partnerships (Frankl, 2016).

Joy Dryfoos, co-founder of the Coalition for Community Schools and a leader in the development of full-service community schools, writes at length about the difficulties schools experience in developing cross-sector partnerships (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). She lists a number of challenges that full-service community schools encounter in developing partnerships, referring to a 2001 study that examined initiatives in ten cities. Challenges with developing partnerships, the study says, “. . . were formidable, they were typically unanticipated during the planning stages, and they occurred with consistency across programs, regardless of model type” (Grossman, Walker, & Raley, 2001, p. 11). Dryfoos goes on to list a number of challenges individual campuses face in negotiating with partners, including use of space, maintenance, transportation, equitable offerings to students, confidentiality, behavior management, lack of integration with academic planning, sustainable funding, communication barriers with families and a lack of support from faculty. While all of these challenges are addressable through problem-solving, planning, negotiation, relationship-building and clearly understood partner agreements, these all take time which is often in short supply in high-poverty schools.

We could also use Bolman and Deal’s four frames model (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) as a way of understanding the collaborative challenges communities face in developing successful cross-sector partnerships (2013, p. 19):

1. Structural (organizational activities and strategic planning): A school might

form an informal, ad hoc partner team to plan an event, with no meeting agendas or planning document, which frustrates institutional partners who are used to structured planning processes, with pre-determined outcomes. Partners may want to engage in a more formal strategic planning process that feels unnecessary to school staff or community participants (Hess, 1999; Rubin, 2009).

2. Human Resource (developing capacity of participants): A school might assign one person to be in charge of coordinating partnerships and volunteers, including parents, with little support or training. Partners may have little guidance as to who to assign to a project, or what contributions will be expected. Different understandings of leadership may lead to conflict. Teams may lack the administrative support to meet differing partner expectations for documents and communication (Levi, 2014; Schein & Schein, 2017).

3. Political (decision-making, resource allocation, use of power): Various expectations about governance and decision-making, especially when working in a volunteer collaboration, can quickly derail meetings. “Who’s in charge?” is one of the most explosive questions a group has to answer. In addition, many partners may only give lip-service to the decision-making role of parents and community members (Hess, 1999; Freire, 2000; Rubin, 2009; Warren & Mapp, 2011).

4. Symbolic (shared values, rituals and symbols): Creating habits and traditions, as well as valuing the culture of a campus or its community, may be new ground for partners who work in more institutional settings. Partners who are outcome-oriented and giving a high value to data may not see the value of a community’s history or its past accomplishments (Hess, 1999; Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans, 2010; Wolff, 2010).

The Shared DNA Community Schools and Collective Impact Initiatives

The research literature shows that “. . . cross-sector collaborations to improve urban communities and educational outcomes have historically been difficult to pull of and to sustain; they have resulted in some individual successes but few widespread improvements . . . To date, however, the contemporary literature and emergent movement for collective impact have been somewhat disconnected from this historical and theoretical lineage . . . (Henig et al., 2015, p. 2). It seems that every generation discovers anew the idea of working collectively to improve society (and by extension, to improve education), and yet we do not take enough time unpacking the lessons learned by previous generations or understanding the DNA of our current situation.

David Tyack and Larry Cuban, in their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, point out that education has played an outsize role since the American Revolution as a way to further America’s economic, intellectual and social goals (1995). The notion of bringing social services into schools and placing schools at the heart of community life was first expressed by John Dewey (1902), who was heavily influenced by his association with Jane Addams (Deegan, 1988). John S. Rogers, who has chronicled the history of community schools, suggests that the “impulse to make schools the center of community life . . . achieves salience at certain historical moments. . . in opposition to powerful forces of bureaucratization and centralization” (1998, p. 3). He further connects the impulse with a desire to “recapture a certain democratic strain within American education” (p. 3). Though the community school approach has had its supporters for more than a century, and gained widespread attention in the 1940s and 50s through the efforts of the Mott Foundation and the work being done in Flint, Michigan, the efforts

have shown limited ability to effect systemic change. Rogers suggests that this is because each of the surges of interest in community schools came in response to a period of crisis (such as the Great Depression) and interest ebbed as the crisis passed. In addition, these earlier efforts were not adequately integrated with the core educational mission of the schools, creating struggles between educators, social service providers, and community members about the appropriate priorities of schools (Mott Foundation, 1994; Rogers, 1998).

This all changed with the expansion in the 1960s of government funding and programs designed to combat poverty and improve educational and social outcomes for children who had long been left out of the mainstream of America's prosperity, including children of color (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Zeitz, 2018). Ramping up the "war on poverty" meant enormous challenges, including the coordination of anti-poverty efforts at the state and community levels. The result, by many accounts, was a chaotic system of funding and service delivery that resulted in waste, inefficiency, and underutilization, a lack of evaluation and accountability, and bureaucratic hurdles for agencies, community organizations, and families (Henig et al., 2015). A robust and often contentious conversation about the root causes of poverty, including the role of race, the legacy of slavery and segregation, and long-standing educational inequities were reflected in the Moynihan Report and the Coleman Report (U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965; Coleman et al., 1966; Acs et al., 2013). The Coleman Report, entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, ". . . concluded that 'school factors' were less instrumental in determining individual performance than 'family background and socioeconomic factors'" (Zeitz, 2018, p. 261). Coleman's conclusion was used by

both liberals and conservatives to argue their cases for and against increased government spending on anti-poverty programs, including spending on education. While there were successes, especially at the policy level, the “war on poverty” also “. . . created and fueled doubts about the ability of the government to intervene effectively to solve complex problems” (Henig et al., 2015, p. 12).

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which created the Headstart, Job Corps and VISTA programs, also established community action agencies (CAAs), new nonprofit organizations that were supposed to coordinate programs locally and empower low-income communities by involving them in decision-making. “The vision was that CAAs would have a planning capacity that would cut across community agencies and sectors, would engage in various linkage strategies; case management outreach, and case finding, client advocacy, and collocation of activities.” (Kagan & Neville, 1993, p. 17). The new agencies quickly became controversial and politically contentious and as a result had limited success (Zeitz, 2018, pp. 262-63). They were disconnected from local government, sometimes duplicated functions already being performed by local agencies, and they were often in competition with a variety of important existing community entities that influenced local planning decisions, from churches to chambers of commerce (Schorr, 1997; Henig et al., 2015).

With funding constrained by defense spending under President Nixon, large federal projects began to be pushed to states and localities through block grants and direct grants to service providers, in the belief that they could “. . . administer programs and coordinate more effective and efficient service delivery. In place of new government expenditures came a new emphasis on research, demonstration projects and legislation

designed to improve access to services for children and families by combating the fragmentation of services caused by bureaucratic specialization” (Henig et al., 2015, p. 13). Eliot Richardson, President Nixon’s Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, introduced the concept of service integration, which claimed that clients would benefit if agencies coordinated their activities, from eligibility to service delivery (Kagan & Neville, 1993). It should be noted that this choice by the federal government to not fund large anti-poverty projects in favor of less-costly demonstration projects, often implemented by nonprofit agencies or education institutions, continues to this day, setting up both competition between funding recipients and challenges with program sustainability (Kohn, 1992; Schorr, 1997; Zeitz, 2018). Two bills were passed by Congress during this time, the *Community Schools Act* and the *Community Schools and Comprehensive Community Education Act* that provided the first federal seed money for community schools (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003).

While large-scale anti-poverty projects may have struggled with reduced funding during the 70s and 80s, what did remain was a belief that funding for education needed to be matched with funding in other areas that supported a child’s development, including early childhood, health and housing (Coleman, 1987). By the early 90s, the full-service community school model was being funded with federal, state and foundation funding. A number of states, including Florida, New Jersey, California and Missouri passed legislation and provided funding for full-service community schools, providing a “one stop shop” nearby or within schools for various social services and supports (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). In 1996, Crowson and Boyd noted:

“The broad appeal, rapid dissemination and ‘bandwagon’ flavor of the

coordinated-services concept are shown in the widening array of proposals and agencies with plans, recommendations and project descriptions . . .

Experimentation throughout the nation has been growing at a pace that makes the tracking of developments difficult, despite the help of newly established conferences and computerized directories” (p. 148).

At the same time, federal and state funding was provided for programs that supported community school priorities, including adult education and literacy, after school programs (including 21st Century Learning Center grants), early childhood, dropout recovery and career and technology education (Dryfoos, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). For example, Texas passed in 1995 a “community education” act that provided funding and support for adult education programs provided through K-12 schools (Texas Education Code §§ 29.251-29.259, 1995-2019)

In the 1990s, the federal government also began funding place-based initiatives that sought to transform blighted neighborhoods and reduce poverty. Called Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs), these initiatives sought “fundamental transformation of poor neighborhoods and the people who lived there” (Kubisch, 1996). Examples of CCIs were projects funding by HUD (Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, HOPE VI, Community Development Block Grants, Community Outreach Partnerships Centers), projects funded by foundations (Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program/Surdna Foundation, Neighborhood and Family Initiative/Ford Foundation, Rebuilding Communities/Making Connections, New Futures, all from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Neighborhood Preservation Initiative/Small Cities Initiative, both from the Pew Charitable Trusts) and local projects that drew from combinations of

federal, foundation and local funding (Baltimore's Community Building in Partnership, Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Healthy Neighborhoods in multiple cities) (Turnham & Bonjorni, 2004). The CCI approach brought investments designed to coordinate and create synergy among programs in human services, community revitalization, and economic development within a given geographic area where anti-poverty programs had previously worked in parallel and without connection (Henig et al., 2015).

While many of these projects focused on the physical transformation of blighted housing, businesses and land, most of them had a strong community organizing component that connected funders to local leaders. The goal was to produce systems change through "sustainable processes, organizations, and relationships" (Chaskin, Chipenda-Dansokho, & Toler, 2000, p. 3). Community engagement and community building were central to the CCI approach, which took an asset-oriented or strengths-oriented approach (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). CCIs for the most part also sought to build on and support existing programs rather than develop new ones. They saw their job as to "fill gaps, connect resources, build infrastructure and organize the constituent elements of the communities in which they work" (Kubisch, 1996). Just as in community schools, the CCI approach was to integrate systems and coordinate services. All areas of community were targeted, including education, health, jobs, housing and community engagement. CCIs also worked to affect poverty at the policy level, making funding more flexible and responsive to local need. (Dryfoos, 1994; Mossberger, 2010).

However, the CCI approach, while similar to community schools in its emphases on systems, coordination and the impact of community factors on long-term poverty, had

numerous shortcomings, including the problem that the outcomes of CCIs were not always well-defined or easily measured (Kubisch et al., 2010). The Aspen Roundtable studied nearly 50 CCIs from 1990 to 2010 and found a range of problems that limited their effectiveness (Hess, 1999; Kubisch et al., 2010).

Some of the problems identified were structural, including the roles and responsibilities of lead organizations, whether lead applicants should be new or existing community-based entities, and the time, costs, and strategies for managing collaborations. The role of funders also presented difficulties, including the need to balance long-term and short-term results in order to show success and maintain funding. Measuring success, including how to assess and value community capacity, building capacity for data collection, defining who did what, how much, and what actually changed in the way things worked, evaluating impact on individuals, and how to describe systems level policy change were all issues identified as problems for CCIs (Brown & Fiester, 2007; Kubisch et al., 2010). While the Aspen Roundtable study recognized lasting positive change, including an increase in best-practice programming and increased community leadership capacity, Brown & Fiester's study of three CCI projects in the San Francisco area funded by the Hewlett Foundation found, despite investing over \$20 million over 10 years (1996-2006), the projects ". . . fell far short of achieving the hoped for tangible improvements in residents' lives" (Brown & Fiester, 2007, p. 3).

Another problem noted in studies of CCIs is that short-term community goals and objectives did not align with the goals set by professional staff and funders. While CCIs were mandated to engage communities, this often did not translate to communities having control over planning or funding, with top-down planning and implementation the norm.

Given the histories of power and resource inequities, this created tensions between foundations, intermediary organizations and community members (Hess, 1999; Chaskin, 2000).

Overall, funding was a problem for CCIs, with the idea that “modest investments could drive widespread change” not working in practice (Henig et al., 2015, p. 17). Short-term and unsustainable funding from foundations did not leverage, in most cases, the large amount of municipal funding and business investment, as well as school district funding, necessary to make the deep change proposed by the CCIs. Promises of increased efficiencies resulting in more available funding, while perhaps possible over a long period of time, did not materialize in the short term. (Kubisch et al., 2010; Henig et al., 2015).

By the early 2000s, enthusiasm by large funders, including the federal government, for experimentation in local cross-sector collaboration had waned, though local entities, including anchor nonprofits, city and county government, banks, higher education institutions and grassroots groups, continued to sustain and develop place-based community development projects (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Kubisch et al., 2010; Henig et al., 2015). Various coalitions established in the 1990s, including the Coalition for Community Schools and the faith-based Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), focused on developing research and training materials that could improve the outcomes of local cross-sector initiatives (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Gordon & Perkins, 2013). The CCDA, founded by civil rights activist John Perkins in 1989, has been particularly successful in bridging the gap between white, African-American, Latino and Asian churches working in low-income

communities by using the principles of living within the community (relocation), redistribution (economic justice) and reconciliation (relationship building and listening). Other grassroots, regional and national faith-based groups focused on social justice and economic development also continued to advance the work started by CCIs, including Sojourners in Washington, D.C., the IAF (closely aligned with Catholic, as well as mainline Protestant and Jewish faith communities), the NAACP, the Urban League and Faith in Action (formerly PICO) (Stafford, 2007; Cannon, 2009; Dubb, 2018). Many grassroots faith groups, such as the faith-based nonprofit Esperanza, founded in the mid-1980s in north Philadelphia, have adopted the asset-based community development principles of Kretzmann and McKnight to develop and sustain ambitious cross-sector community development projects (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Rhayn, 2019).

The passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (No Child Left Behind (NCLB), 2002) pushed standards-based education reform into the limelight as the primary strategy for reducing educational inequities, and in turn child poverty. In addition, privatization efforts, including charter schools and vouchers for private schools, as well as foundation-funded school turnaround strategies, began to gain momentum as the main strategies to break long-entrenched inequities in many urban school districts (Berliner, 2009; Mehta, 2010; McDermott, 2011; Ravitch, 2011). While interest in the external community factors affecting poor families never completely waned, federal and state funding dried up for community-based efforts. Vestiges of many of the collaborative organizations and structures, while reduced in scope, still hang on to life (Kubisch et al., 2010; Lawson & Van Veen, 2016).

Between 2000 and 2010, large-scale efforts to transform communities, including

public schools, were the exception rather than the rule. The Coalition for Community Schools continued to carry the torch for partnership-based school and community transformation (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012). Regional efforts, including Portland, Oregon's SUN (School Uniting Neighborhoods) community schools, Tulsa's focus on early childhood programs, Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers, the continuing growth of New York City's Children's Aid Society community schools, Family League of Baltimore's development of strong after school programs, and the work of the Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania to pioneer university-assisted community schools in Philadelphia, are all examples of community school projects that have continued to thrive, even as No Child Left Behind shifted the focus of funders and federal grants towards testing and accountability-based strategies (Warren & Mapp, 2011; Walker et al., 2013).

President Barack Obama's legacy in community-based education reform is particularly mixed, with large federal investments in state and local education (part of economic recovery funding in 2009 and 2010) providing federal leverage for the direction of school improvement strategies. In particular, the Race to the Top Fund (RTTT), School Improvement Grants (SIG) and the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) brought a total of \$8.5 billion to Title 1 schools, in addition to the \$14 billion that went to schools from the economic recovery act (Kutash et al., 2010). Consultants and foundations who would have been involved in community-based school improvement projects a decade earlier were instead competing to be partners and intermediaries for state agencies and local school districts, required to employ a narrow range of reforms, including reconstitution, turning over campuses to charter operators and school closure.

Only one choice, school transformation, allowed space for a community-based approach, but only after a mandated replacement of the principal (Hess & McShane, 2018).

At the same time, President Obama envisioned the replication of several place-based programs, harkening back to the CCI model. President Obama as a candidate had visited the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and was impressed by a neighborhood transformation focus paired with educational supports. With the goal of creating 20 more HCZ-style zones in America's toughest inner cities, the Promise Neighborhood grant was created. Cities would receive one-year planning grants to help create their infrastructure, followed by multi-million-dollar five-year grants to implement school and community-based transformations (Henig et al., 2015). In contrast to the earlier CCI efforts, Promise Neighborhoods narrowed the focus to education, while integrating more recent community school thinking about the external factors that become barriers to learning. Community transformation would be a long-term by-product of school improvement rather than the focus of the grant (Hess & McShane, 2018). At the same time that the U.S. Department of Education was funding Promise Neighborhoods, other departments were experimenting with CCI-type projects, most notably the Choice Neighborhood grants through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is notable that both Promise Neighborhood and Choice Neighborhood grants, while similar in approach, were disconnected at the federal level and did little to foster collaboration at the local level. The Promise Zone designation was created in 2014 as a late attempt to connect various federal urban revitalization grants, including Promise and Choice Neighborhood grants, but the 22 designees received technical assistance and bonus points on federal grants, without any additional funding to support collaboration (Stoker & Rich, 2020).

While laudable, Promise Neighborhoods have experienced the same challenges that earlier CCIs and cross-sector partnerships have faced, including governance issues, a lack of collaboration with other similar initiatives operating in the same locality, cultural challenges in combining top-down and grassroots leadership in a short-term project, and the challenge of working with entrenched school and municipal bureaucracies, for whom the Promise Neighborhood grant might seem minor, relative to their overall budgets. For some grantees, the easy way out of the problems caused by working with existing structures was to follow the Harlem Children’s Zone model of starting or partnering with charter schools. While easier in the short run, this approach did not build capacity for community collaboration (Rubin, 2009; Thorbourne, 2014; Bower & Rossi, 2018; Greene & McShane, 2018).

At the same time that the Promise Neighborhood grant was beginning, another movement aimed at building local collaborations to support improved education outcomes was beginning. In 2011, John Kania and Mark Kramer wrote an influential article published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR)* entitled “Collective Impact” analyzing cross-sector efforts directed at societal challenges, and in particular, education. Their analysis highlighted the work of Strive, a nonprofit working to support student success in Greater Cincinnati (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Though Strive had only been bringing local partners together for three years, Kania and Kramer credited their work with significant advances in student achievement in three school districts (ignoring the longer-term role that Cincinnati’s Community Learning Centers had played in this transformative work). Nevertheless, five practices were identified that cross-sector efforts such as Strive used to produce change. These include a common agenda, shared

measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support organizations. Henig et al. (2015) did a web search of document titles containing the term collective impact and found only sporadic use of the term prior to 2011. In 2014, a search on Google Scholar yielded 1,350 hits (p. 2). In 2020, 70 cross-sector partnerships, focused mainly on education, had become part of the Strive national network (StriveTogether, *Where We Work*, 2020).

As noted earlier, a number of urban areas, including Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Portland and Austin, have developed competing or overlapping cross-sector education initiatives, sometimes with the same partners, including school district, service providers and foundations. In some cases, this may be helpful where one group may be unable to adequately serve a large geography, but the existence of similar cross-sector initiatives in one space belies the original purpose of Strive-model collective impact efforts, which is to “. . . reduce the fragmentation, duplication and intergroup competition for resources that some observers believe is contributing to internally inconsistent and potentially wasteful efforts” (Henig et al., 2016, p. 27). In the original *SSIR* article defining collective impact, Kania & Kramer (2011) contrast collective impact with isolated impact, where single organizations compete for funding aimed at affecting a particular problem. In their view, competition is ineffective and wasteful:

“Funders search for more effective interventions as if there was a cure for failing schools that only need to be discovered, in the way that medical cures are discovered in laboratories. As a result of this process, nearly 1.4 million nonprofits try to invent independent solutions to major social problems, often working at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived

resources required to make meaningful progress” (para. 12).

However, while Strive has built a community of collective impact initiatives to share best practices and lessons learned, it still has not addressed the underlying issue of competition for funding by social service providers, school districts and nonprofits. Alfie Kohn, in *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (1992), argues that our individualist and zero-sum perspectives cause us to “restrict our thinking to the situation as it exists in a given instant” (p. 65). Kohn says that we must shift to addressing the societal context that is causing competition, and work together to change that context. Unfortunately, while collective impact partners may gather at the table together, their motivations may be less collaborative and more competitive than they admit as long as our current funding model for social change projects exists. As Kohn says, “The central message of all competition is that other people are potential obstacles to one’s own success” (Kohn, 1993, para. 5).

Tom Wolff, who has written extensively on coalition building and community development, especially in the public health arena, finds that the failure to address competition as a weakness in the collective impact model is because it emerged from a “top-down business consulting experience . . . not a community development model” (2016, p. 3). Wolff goes on to point out that Kania and Kramer, using a few case studies as their research base, have developed a model that ignores the rich experience and literature around coalition building and cross-sector partnerships, and fails to address such key issues as public policy, systems change, honoring grassroots leadership and social justice. It could be noted, however, that a strength of the Strive model is its comfort with the business community, with the initial work of Strive in Cincinnati funded

by Procter and Gamble, and many other collective impact projects having strong representation from both the funding and business communities (Henig et al., 2016). Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi and Herremans, in their extensive survey of corporate community engagement efforts, found that truly transformational engagement, where both business and community listen and learn from one another, and where the influence of community is authentic (what they term “transformational engagement”) is difficult and rare (2010, pp. 303-4).

Other key differences between collective impact initiatives using the Strive model and other cross-sector education efforts such as community schools, include a lack of programmatic elements in Strive initiatives compared to most cross-sector education initiatives, as well as the emphasis Strive places on measurable outcomes. Community school and related cross-sector initiatives focus on a comprehensive approach to school and community change, including early childhood education, wraparound supports for families, college and career readiness, after school and summer youth programs, enrichment programs (including the arts), parent and community engagement, and adult education, as well as recruiting and keeping highly experienced teachers, and using a shared leadership model. Strive, on the other hand, comes at educational change with process recommendations but almost a blank slate as far as programmatic elements, leaving that level of school design to individual campuses and school district. Strive also has no underlying educational theory, whereas the theory of change used by community schools recognizes the role both internal and external factors play in a student’s success (Henig et al. 2015). Strive’s hope is that the community will come up with agreed upon outcomes, along with strategies to reach those outcomes, all based on a “vision for

improving outcomes for students beginning at birth, continuing into and through secondary and into and through postsecondary schooling” (StriveTogether, *Where We Work*, 2020). A scan of Strive-affiliated initiatives shows, however, that at least some of the programmatic elements found in other cross-sector education initiatives end up being contained in local strategic plans (E3 Alliance, 2020).

The concept of student-oriented measurable outcomes and “objective data-driven decision making” is also at the forefront of Strive collective impact initiatives, whereas community school cross-sector initiatives measure their success using a broader set of outcomes. Collective impact “roadmaps” typically set goals such as such as kindergarten readiness, 3rd and 8th grade reading levels based on standardized testing, high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment and completion (Henig et al., 2016; E3 Alliance, 2020). With collective impact emerging in the late 2000s at the same time that *No Child Left Behind* was in its heyday with state and local education agencies adopting national targets for academic achievement, it makes sense that Strive and similar efforts would adopt outcome measures similar to those mandated by *NCLB* (McDermott, 2011).

What is missing, according to Henig et al., are data indicators that reflect the process steps necessary to reach larger goals, or that reflect the work of the multiple organizations working collectively. The Strive theory of action uses statements such as “Organizations, institutions and community members align their work to support the cradle-to-career vision” and “Student-level data is accessible and used regularly by relevant partners to inform actions to improve outcomes and reduce disparities” without any recognition of the complexity and difficulty each of those statements represents (StriveTogether, *Theory of Action*, 2020). In addition, the indicators seem to be chosen

more for their availability than for their usefulness (Henig et al., 2016). A small percentage of collective impact organizations in the Wallace survey use some sort of health measure (17%), parent engagement (13%), social-emotional development (5%), technology (5%) and post-secondary advising (4%) (Henig et al., 2016, p. 17).

To be fair, community school and other cross-sector education initiatives have struggled to find meaningful outcome measures that reflect the joint work of partners. This is reflected in the Promise Neighborhood grant, which requires grantees to track 15 indicators against baselines, including indicators for student mobility, early childhood readiness, parent engagement, neighborhood safety, access to technology and attendance, in addition to academic milestones measured by standardized testing. The grant provides technical assistance for grantees as they develop data collection practices, including confidentiality, data sharing, unduplication of services, and evaluation (Comey et al., 2013). However, with the relatively short duration of the grant (five to six years), grantees that are building partnerships, services and data systems from the ground up are finding meaningful change and sustainability difficult. In 2015, the Department of Education abandoned efforts to do in-depth evaluation of Promise Neighborhood grantees due to the difficulty and expense involved in reporting, and has instead focused on a shared learning approach, building a national network of Promise Neighborhood and Full-Service Community Schools grantees (Smith, 2011; Jean-Louis, McAfee & Miller, 2014; Katz et al., 2018; Deich, Padgett, & Neary, 2019).

Several underlying issues can be identified with the way outcome measures are used by collective impact and cross-sector initiatives for purposes of evaluation, public communication, fundraising and planning. These include the unquestioning adoption of a

positivist scientific approach to measure the impact of social services and education strategies (Crotty, 1998; Marsh & Stoker, 2002; Muller, 2018), the challenge of determining causality in a collective effort (Murnane & Willett, 2011; Smith, 2011; Jacobson & Shah, 2014; Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017), the complexity and difficulty of collecting and using data in a collective effort which may far outweigh the usefulness of that data, given the time spent developing data sharing agreements, policies and practices across a large number of organizations (Deich, Padgett, & Neary, 2019), and the dependence of the initiative on school district data, including standardized testing data, which may reflect changing and inconsistent measurement standards at the local, state and federal levels (Mehta, 2010; Ravitch, 2011; Bryk et al., 2017).

The Challenge of Developing Successful Cross-Sector Partnerships in Community Schools

It is clear that after almost five decades of coalition building to support community and educational change, progress is possible but difficult to sustain, and occurs in an ever-changing political, cultural and economic context. Community schools, with its focus on the school-based and community-based factors that influence student success, along with its belief in the power of partnerships, has been a healthy counterbalance to the testing and accountability culture with its roots in the flawed *A Nation at Risk* report and enshrined in *No Child Left Behind*.

Clearly, cross-sector partnerships to support education have improved outcomes for countless children in our poorest communities (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012; Dubin, 2015; Frankl, 2016). They provide a platform for shared leadership, increase efficiencies and add resource capacity, turn competition into

collaboration, provide advocacy and political power when necessary, question the status quo, bring a variety of perspectives to the table to problem-solve, support teachers, schools and students in myriad ways, and most importantly, ensure that our public schools fulfill their purpose in our democracy (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Rubin, 2009; Wolff, 2010). In cities across America, including Portland, Oakland, Austin, Chicago and New York, robust partnerships supporting community schools are making a huge difference.

But as a movement, sustainable community schools and the cross-sector partnerships that are central to their success are the exception rather than the rule. Recent years have seen an uptick in interest in community schools, including strong advocacy and support by the nation's two largest teacher unions, and the Coalition for Community Schools has worked with partners to clarify standard and provide district and state level policies that can increase consistency and effectiveness. The Coalition suggests that there are approximately 5,000 community schools across the U.S., but this figure has been used since 2016, and growth has surely occurred since that time (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020). A recent paper by Jane Quinn and Marty Blank, two of the most recognized leaders of the community school movement, places the current number of community schools between 8,000 and 10,000 (Quinn & Blank, 2020). By comparison, the National Center for Education Statistics estimated that there were 7,193 charter schools educating 6.2% of students enrolled in U. S. public schools in 2016-17 (2018).

While it is clear that cross-sector partnerships, whether they are between one campus and a small group of community partners or are city or region-wide collective impact efforts, are advantageous to form, they are also difficult to sustain and make

effective for four reasons: complexity, structure, sustainability and culture (Rubin, 2009; Wolff, 2010; Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer, 2012; Forrer, Kee, & Boyer, 2014).

The Problem of Complexity: Schools and school districts are complicated entities. As obvious as this may be to those who have worked for any period of time in a school, it is a perspective that is not shared by most of the public. At some point or other (unless one was home-schooled), everyone has spent years inside schools. They have interacted with teachers, seen the principal pop in and out of their office, scurried to and fro at the sound of a bell schedule, eaten cafeteria food and participated in extracurricular activities. Everyone thinks that they understand schools but being a student in no way helps you understand how schools really function (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Walford, 2008). It's like being the customer at a McDonald's. You've never been behind the counter, never seen the manager tracking inventory, hiring and training staff or preparing for a food safety inspection. You only know the experience you have had ordering and receiving food.

On the other side of the desk in any public school in America, teachers are preparing daily lessons for multiple subjects according to state-mandated curriculum and district-mandated timetables. Principals are hiring, training and evaluating staff, along with overseeing a multi-million-dollar budget, complying with safety protocols, meeting with unhappy parents and overwhelmed teachers, and many other daily tasks, all while navigating district politics at multiple levels (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Add to this the additional challenges at low-income schools of teacher turnover, supporting English language learners, special education and other students with special needs, chronic absenteeism, testing and accountability pressures, and coordinating with community partners and nonprofits that provide after school and other student services, and one can

see that schools are anything but simple to understand for outside partners.

Rick Nason, in his book *It's not Complicated: The Art and Science of Complexity in Business*, writes about the differences between simple, complicated and complex systems (2017). Simple systems can be managed using formulaic approaches and checklists. One could make a case that some schools, especially those in homogeneous communities that are dealing with few students or families with significant needs, can operate using simple systems. Complicated systems have more layers and need more expertise to manage, but successful management is possible if the proper models are applied to the systems involved. Schools, especially larger elementary or secondary schools in stable communities, could be described as having complicated systems. Again, successful management is possible, though inexperienced leadership may be incapable of managing the school well. However, schools in low-income and urban areas need complex systems that can deal with the many community factors that are beyond the power of most schools to control. Complex systems can stymie experienced leadership in that formulaic approaches to management and problem solving may be undermined by changing and unstable conditions. School improvement consultants and top-down district or state agency leaders may try to apply a rigid, rules-based, complicated approach to a complex situation with little to no success (Kutash et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011; Greene & McShane, 2018).

As complex organizations, low-income schools and school districts are organized with multiple overlapping layers of function and authority. Teachers, who are charged with delivering the educational product (in business terms), are oftentimes unaware or unfamiliar with the complex systems that support their schools, but administrators are

aware of how many overlapping layers of authority there are affecting their campus (Manna & McGuinn, 2013). A lack of understanding of the complexity of schools and school districts is a barrier for partners seeking to provide a service or enact change (which is a key reason that the Coalition for Community Schools recommends that an experienced intermediary organization be in place as a bridge between partners and community schools) (Melaville, Jacobson & Blank, 2011). Given that coalition building can be complex in the best of situations, and that partners may come from complex organizational cultures themselves, one can see how complexity can lead to chaos and poor results (Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Rubin, 2009; Wolff, 2010).

Not only are schools, coalitions and communities complex, but so are social problems. In fact, a term has been coined for highly complex (and possibly unsolvable) problems: wicked problems. Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber (1973) wrote, in an influential article entitled “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” that “The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail, because of the nature of these problems. They are ‘wicked’ problems, whereas science has developed to deal with ‘tame’ problems” (p. 155). Rittel and Webber’s article actually emerged from a weekly seminar hosted at UC-Berkeley beginning in 1967 and funded by NASA aimed at applying the technology and systems lessons learned from the space program to urban problems, at a time when cities in America were exploding with racial unrest (Skaburksis, 2008). Rittel, a preeminent mathematician and designer, realized that using current planning and systems thinking on social problems would fail for many reasons, including “. . . incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these

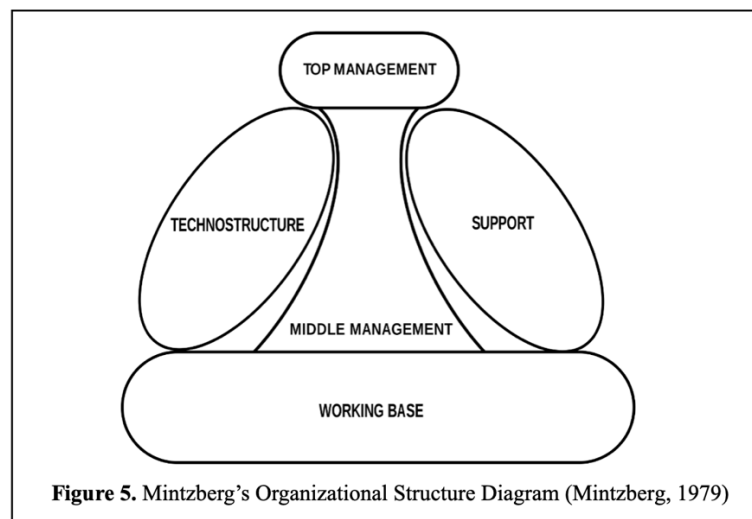
problems with other problems” (Kolko, 2012). Oft-mentioned wicked problems include poverty, education, inequality and disease. Kolko goes on to say that wicked problems can’t be solved or fixed, but they can be mitigated, limiting the “. . . negative consequences of wicked problems and positioning the broad trajectory of culture in new and desirable directions” (Kolko, 2012). A whole industry has emerged since the 1960s to study complexity as it applies to social problems, including wicked problems, and cross-sector partnerships supporting community schools, especially those taking on larger projects, would be wise to study the history of what has worked and what has not (Jordan, 2013; Kania & Kramer, 2013; Head, 2018; Van Tulder & Keen, 2018).

The Problem of Structure: Cross-sector collaborations that support community schools bring together partners, including campus and school district partners, who come from organizations with a wide variety of organizational structures, some formalized and some less so. These structures inform participants’ expectations about how the collaboration itself should be organized, may place limits on the abilities of participants to make decisions or act, and determine who represents the organizations in the collaborative (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Henig et al., 2015; Schein & Schein, 2017). A lack of insight into or understanding of one’s own organizational structure or the structures of other participants’ organizations (especially a lack of understanding of how schools and school districts are structured) may lead to feelings of frustration and powerlessness (Rubin, 2009; Wolff, 2010; Schein & Schein, 2017).

In order to deal with complexity, entities (businesses, organizations, schools, clubs, coalitions) choose particular organizational structures to divide and coordinate tasks (Schein & Schein, 2017). These organizational structures vary widely, with some

entities using a hierarchical, top-down (or vertical) structure and others emphasizing lateral approaches to organization, including teams, task forces and networking (Bolman and Deal, 2013; Pershing & Austin, 2015). Large bureaucracies, including government, lean towards vertical or hierarchical structures (Schein & Schein, 2017). A small nonprofit or a start-up technology company might be more “flat,” with everyone working collaboratively without an organizational chart clarifying lines of authority (Pitts & Clawson, 2000).

Organizations also allocate personnel according to functions, with an operational sector (those who do the front-line work), a management and strategic planning sector, and others who provide support for operations, management and technology (Mintzberg, 1979; Bolman and Deal, 2013). In *The Structuring of Organizations*, Mintzberg diagrammed these basic functions, which has in turn become the way most people understand businesses, organizations and even schools and school districts:



Organizational theorists have identified a number of variations on Mintzberg's model, some focused on various employee functions, others on products or geographies. The matrix model combines the functional and product structures, with managers in

charge of projects, resulting in multiple lines of authority for employees. A machine bureaucracy, with large middle management enforcing uniformity of processes and product, may be appropriate for a manufacturer or fast-food chain. A large university may have a professional bureaucracy with a relatively small management team and a large working base of professors and instructional staff (Pescosolido & Aminzade, 1999). A start up or small nonprofit may resist hiring middle management, instead investing in front-line staff. Organizations and businesses may even function using an ad hoc structure, morphing according to the work at hand and resources available (Pitts & Clawson, 2000; Bolman and Deal, 2013). Some large organizations, including multinational corporations, look more like a collection of organizations, aligning themselves into a network, and may even outsource manufacturing or other processes to other companies. While the idea of a company's salesforce being independent contractors is as old as door-to-door salesmen and Amway, technology has given this structure new life, with Uber, Door Dash and other companies creating relatively flat organizational structures with very little in the way of middle management or support staff (Schein & Schein, 2017).

While some organizations or businesses may intentionally choose an organizational structure, in most cases these structures are emerging and ever-changing. Burton and Obel (2018) developed an "if-then" heuristic to help organizations make optimal choices, depending on the product or service they were providing. How well these structures work depends, to a great degree, on how well the structure fits the environment and mission of the organization. Other factors, including division of labor, integration of staff, span of control (how many people report to a supervisor), technology,

lines of authority (how many supervisors each employee may report to), staffing, systems, shared values and mission, and organizational culture may all influence the choice and effectiveness of an organizational structure (Waterman, Peters, & Phillips, 1980; Pitts & Clawson, 2000).

Schools and school districts have developed over the past two centuries from informal one-room schoolhouses to organizations that often dwarf the size of large corporations (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In the early 20th century, progressives sought to reform what was regarded as a “highly inefficient patchwork of schooling” into an efficient and cost-effective system of schools, based on the ideas of Frederick Taylor (Mehta, 2013, p. 3). Ironically, this was also the time that John Dewey was espousing a student and community-centric model of schooling that allowed for creativity and democracy in the running of schools (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). These two impulses, of organizational efficiency and creative individualism, have worked in tension throughout the 20th and 21st centuries as we have structured and envisioned schools. Jal Mehta, in *The Allure of Order*, describes the attraction Americans have had to scientific management as a way to bring order to education, “. . . a ‘soft’ and undisciplined field” needing standardization (2013, p. 5). The danger, Mehta points out, is that we fall into the trap Max Weber pointed out of valuing the measurable over the meaningful (Shils & Finch, 1949; Mehta, 2013).

How schools and school districts are organized is often confusing and frustrating to partners and cross-sector collaborations working to create and support community schools (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011). Are schools bureaucratic, top-down organizations producing a product (high school graduates ready for post-secondary

education) with superintendents and their principals able to command their staffs to execute various tasks? Or are schools more like a collective of artisans and craftspeople (teachers) who are able to access various supports that further their mission to help each young person fulfill his or her individual destiny, with the principal mainly acting in an administrative capacity (Farris-Berg, Dirkswager, & Junge, 2013)? Partners are also confused by district staff who have dotted line authority over projects that intersect with both campuses and departments, similar to a matrix organizational structure, wondering who is actually in charge (Bolman and Deal, 2013).

Education activists and community partners also wonder whether organizational models borrowed from the corporate world and aimed at maximizing profit are really the best models for schools to follow (Ranson, 2003; Ravitch, 2011; Mehta, 2013) Eli Broad, a controversial and wealthy school reform proponent, has used his urban superintendent training program to move large school districts away from traditional educational priorities (teacher training, curriculum) and towards a corporate model of school administration (Greene, 2019). A similar approach can be found in the University of Virginia school improvement program, a partnership between their schools of business and education, that provides educators with an MBA. However, in contrast to the Broad program, which promotes privatization and charter schools as solutions for struggling districts, the UVA program proposes “community-based solutions” that are customized for each district and school (University of Virginia, 2020).

Cross-sector collaborations also struggle with finding an organizational structure that meets the needs of all of the partners. Often, collaborations borrow structures and processes from the corporate or nonprofit sectors, which may be comfortable to some

partners, but may be disempowering to community members and grassroots organizations (Wolff, 2010; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Hickman, 2016). Decision-making, leadership, facilitation, strategic planning, the role of funders and other organizational considerations can take up valuable time and energy during the formative period, with no short-term results supporting the group's mission (Rubin, 2009; Henig et al., 2015). Douglass Hess, in his analysis of community change initiatives, provides five key questions that can inform cross-sector collaborations and help them find an organizational structure that fits their mission (Hess, 1999).

Partners may have different views as to the relative status and role of the campus or district administration in the collaboration, with positive and negative attitudes towards education staff. For instance, Melaville, Jacobson and Blank (2011), in their diagram of the scaling up, or expansion, process for community schools, show the campus and the district in relatively minor roles, on an equal footing with all other participants. The reality is that, unless the cross-sector collaboration wants to be in confrontation with the schools they purport to serve, true collaboration means honoring the important and powerful role that campuses and school districts play in this work (Harris, 2002; Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Henig et al., 2015).

In order for a cross-sector partnership to successfully grow and sustain a community school or system of community schools, an understanding of how campuses and school districts work is vital. Just as with the problem of complexity, an intermediary agency with experience and understanding of how not just schools and school districts, but also other partners are structured, can help tremendously in meshing the gears between various sectors (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011; Hussein, Plummer, &

Breen, 2018). Without an intermediary, partnerships are likely to encounter the difficulties catalogued by Driscoll, Boyd, and Crowson (1998), including political infighting, leadership issues, lack of resources, limitations imposed by confidentiality and data use restrictions, poor communication, and conflicting cultures, all leading to a lack of effectiveness by the group. Cross-sector structures that do not address power imbalances between smaller and larger partners, grassroots and institutional partners, or even those with a deeper commitment to the work at hand, will struggle to effectively collaborate (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Pittinsky, 2019). Interestingly, Huxham and Vangen, defining leadership as the function that gets things accomplished, argue that structures and processes are as vital to the outcomes of the partnership as institutional or personal leadership. This is similar to the idea of ‘servant leadership’ or leading from behind, where the role of a leader is to create capacity among participants to work together towards a goal (Greenleaf, 1977).

The Problem of Sustainability: Cross-sector partnerships are notoriously difficult to sustain in community schools work (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Wolff, 2010; Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011). As we will see in the next section, differing cultures may be a key culprit, but there are a host of other reasons as well that many of these efforts begin and end within two to three years (Henig et al., 2015).

Cross-sector partnerships, educational coalitions and alliances form for a number of reasons, including a crisis in a particular neighborhood or school, a funding opportunity, replication of initiatives found in other cities, or grassroots organizing to bring about some needed change. Over the years, faith-based and social justice movements have also been active in forming education coalitions. Whatever the case,

there is something that must inspire individuals and organizations to attend meetings and do coalition work (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Cannon, 2009) .

Funding is obviously one reason that cross-sector partnerships struggle for sustainability. Who pays for the work of the backbone agency of intermediary? How do you expand wraparound supports, after school programs and other services without additional funding? Who pays for the data collection, measurement and evaluation that are at the heart of the collective impact approach? Henig et al. point out that “The history of collaborative multi-sector initiatives reveals that the conditions giving rise to such efforts change and the framing that helps to build initial buy-in can prove counterproductive when it comes to sustaining the effort over time” (p. 60). When a partnership starts with significant funding, such as a Promise Neighborhood or other federal grant, shifting to a model that leverages partner resources to provide services may prove difficult. Butterfoss & Kegler (2002) say that “. . . without strong leadership and adequate staffing, coalitions cannot move beyond the initial steps of formation” (p. 4). This takes funding.

While there are many other factors that may affect the life cycle of a cross-sector initiative, a clear definition of sustainability, as well as whether a partnership team even should be sustained, are unclear in the literature. In *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy*, Melaville, Jacobson and Blank (2011) include sustainability as one of four characteristics of an effective system of community schools and cross-sector partnership (the other characteristics being shared ownership, spread and depth). The authors explain that sustainability is the point of developing a system of community schools:

“Implementation is the beginning, not the end, of successful scale up.

Effective scale-up creates an enduring system of community schools that survives leadership changes and other ‘rough weather.’ Durability grows out of an infrastructure that supports a collaborative system based on a long-term vision, continually measures progress against a clear set of benchmarks, and develops the ability to finance the functions of community schools. Moreover, to ensure continuation and expansion, community schools must marshal the capacity to capture and retain the political support of key sectors of the community—parents and resident, voters, taxpayers and policymakers” (pp. 12-13).

While it’s hard to argue that all of the characteristics of a successful community school initiative proposed by Melaville et al., including effective systems, leadership, infrastructure, measurement, finance, and political support, are beneficial to the long-term sustainability of a community school or cross-sector partnership, these characteristics are very difficult to develop and sustain, leading to a tautological loop of needing sustainable elements in order to achieve sustainability (Deich, Padgett, & Neary, 2019). Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) list 21 propositions in their article “The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature,” that, while affirming that all of the characteristics listed above are vital to an initiative’s success, also question what is meant by success. Some partners may carry with them an “internal logic” that sees success as the development of “processes, norms and structures,” while other might see “inclusive democracy” as the measure of success (p. 50). Donahue (2004) proposes three criteria for assessing the success of cross-sector initiatives: simply existing as a collaboration, meeting the “organizational imperatives” of

the collaborating partners, and creating more value to the public than other “feasible alternative arrangements” (p. 6).

One reason that sustainability is problematical to define is that cross-sector partnerships themselves may range from informal and ad hoc, developed to address a short-term crisis or project, to large multi-sector collaborations that are intended to work over a long period time to solve a social or educational problem. Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) describe a continuum of “. . . organizations that hardly relate to each other when it comes to dealing with a public problem that extends beyond their capabilities. At the other end are organizations that have merged into a new entity to handle problems through merged authority and capabilities. In the midrange are organizations that share information, undertake coordinated initiatives, or develop shared-power arrangement such as collaborations . . . in order to pool their capabilities to address the problem or challenge” (p. 44).

Henig et al. (2015) also proposes that, “If partial, fragile, weak, and ephemeral efforts are the norm, it does us little good to proclaim that they don’t count unless they become more comprehensive, stronger, and more institutionalized” (p. 5). In measuring success, and in thinking about how to sustain a cross-sector or community school effort, what level of institutionalization needs to be achieved before an initiative is recognized as sustainable or successful? Do we use rubrics that are process-oriented, such as the Children’s Aid Society’s continuum from exploring to excelling (Lubell, 2011)? Or do we define success the way the Strive collective impact initiatives do, focused on a few object measures of educational progress (StriveTogether, 2020)?

If we return to Donahue’s three criteria for judging the success of a cross-sector

collaboration (or in turn, a community school), we may be able to develop a working definition of sustainability:

1. It must exist. This means that resources, including time, funding and basic commitment from partners to be part of the collaborative, must be in place to some degree that supports the continuing functioning of the collaborative.

2. It must meet the “organizational imperatives” of the partners. There must be clear recognition of what each partner needs from the collaboration and what each partner intends to contribute, as well as any organizational constraints that may hinder participation. This can include recognizing that competition between partners, as well as differing “institutional logics” are at play in any collaboration (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006, p. 50).

3. It must create more value to the public than other “feasible alternative arrangements” (Donahue, 2004, p. 6). Crosby and Bryson (2006) refer to “. . . the creation of a ‘regime of mutual gain’ that produces widespread, lasting public benefits at reasonable cost and taps people’s deepest interest in and desire for a better world” (p. 51). If the collaboration is accomplishing more through mutual effort than would be accomplished separately, then it deserves to continue to exist.

If an effort, whether a community school or other cross-sector education initiative, can continue to exist, if it can continue to meet the needs of its partners, and most importantly, if it can continue to make a significant difference, then it is sustainable. Aidman and Baray (2016) quote a corporate funding partner, commenting on the success of their local cross-sector partnership: “What works in our case is that all sides are benefiting. . . The district has a need that is being met. . . The nonprofit is getting their

program out there, they get to go into a school, and they're being funded. . . As a corporation, we're reaching our philanthropic goals and [providing] volunteer opportunities" (p. 272).

The Problem of Culture: The literature on cross-sector partnerships and community schools notes that conflict, competition and misunderstanding are to be expected in these initiatives, and that trust between partners is paramount for long-term success (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Henig et al, 2015). Gaining trust, however, begins with a deeper understanding of the culture that each participant and organization brings to the table. In particular, understanding the culture of education is vital, since the goal of these initiatives is improved educational outcomes and school improvement.

What do we mean by culture? In education reform circles, talking about changing school culture can simply mean adopting the values and beliefs of a particular reform strategy. For instance, Daggett (2014) says that "culture trumps strategy" (p. 8). He goes on give a short list of beliefs, including college readiness data, the centrality of technology in our society, and the U.S. performance on international education assessments as evidence that we need to disrupt our current educational system and adopt neo-reform models. For Daggett, changing the culture of the school means adopting a particular school reform model imposed from the outside, rather than understanding the current context and culture of the school and its community.

An anthropology professor once said to us that culture is the set of answers to all of the questions we have every morning when we wake up, including why we're here, what we should be doing, what clothes to put on (if any) and how we should relate with other people. Hiebert (1983) defines culture as ". . . the more or less integrated systems of

ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel and do” (p. 30). Our received and constructed culture includes cognitive (knowledge, wisdom), affective (feeling aesthetics) and evaluative (values, allegiances) dimensions, along with behaviors, products, symbols (with their forms and meanings), patterns and systems. People also belong to multiple “cultural frames,” or subcultures attached to various social settings. One person may operate in multiple overlapping subcultures, including family, job, school, religious group, political party, community, race, gender and other social affiliations. (Hiebert, 1983).

In organizational theory, culture can be defined as “. . . the set of habits that allows a group of people to cooperate by assumption rather than by negotiation. Based on that definition, culture is not what we say, but what we do without asking. A healthy culture allows us to produce something with each other, not in spite of each other” (Merchant, 2011). Schein & Schein (2017), acknowledging the elements that anthropologists and sociologists have traditionally included in their definitions of culture such as observed behaviors, physical space, rituals, values, ideologies, norms, rules, skills, mental models, shared meanings and symbols, state that “. . . culture covers pretty much everything that a group has learned as it has evolved” (p. 5). The definition that they propose for culture, however, recognizes that culture must be understood on a group’s “own terms” and defining the elements of a groups culture must be a “dynamic holistic process” (p. 5):

“The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal

integration; which has worked enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness” (p. 6).

While there is some agreement that there are shared elements among a cultural group that can be observed, there is also disagreement about the way cultures are studied and analyzed. The study of cultures, while as old as the Greek historian Herodotus, grew into the modern disciplines of anthropology and sociology during the period of European exploration and colonization. From the 18th through early 20th centuries, there was a strong impulse to scientifically catalog and describe all aspects of our world, including cultures. Collections of cultural artifacts, both ancient and contemporary, grew into museums that attempted to represent cultures, often promoting cultural generalizations with very little cultural or historical context (Eriksen & Nielsen, 2013). Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), introduced the idea that European nations had developed a constructed idea called “The East” that essentialized, or attributed, certain characteristics to a vast array of cultures, both ancient and modern, that inhabited the area from north Africa to Japan. Anthropologists, working in simple either/or categories, depicted cultures, especially those in traditionally Muslim areas, as lazy, languid, sexual, corrupt and backwards, in contrast to European (especially German, French and British) cultures, which were hard-working, restrained, ordered, scientific and modern. Said claims that the impulse driving anthropologists was to create an “other” that would justify the colonial, capitalistic and militaristic goals of the Europeans.

Said's work points out an important argument that cultural researchers have wrestled with since the time of Immanuel Kant. Are there universal truths that can be uncovered by empirical methods? Is truth always influenced by the role of the subject who is observing the object? Especially in the social sciences, can we discover truths that are universal and demonstrable, or is all knowledge constructed to some degree? Kant would argue that the subject, the observer, interprets what is observed, and the "truth," just as in Said's example, will reflect as much about the observer as it does about the observed. On the other hand, empiricists and positivists, following the path laid out by August Comte and his intellectual decedents, influenced the social sciences (including education) to believe in the superiority of scientific inquiry and methods, the inevitability of progress, and the goal (and even possibility) of ". . . presenting our finding as objective truths, claiming validity, perhaps generalizability, on their behalf" (Crotty, 1998, p. 41).

The 20th and 21st centuries, however, have provided significant challenges to positivism, both culturally and philosophically. The idea of continual progress, while reinforced by technological advancement, has faltered in the face of violent wars and the challenges of globalization. Thomas Kuhn, as well as pioneers of quantum physics, including Neils Bohr, Martin Heidegger and Albert Einstein, introduced significant questions about the ability of empiricism to understand the natural (and in Bohr's case, the moral) world. Heidegger, in particular, posited that the status of a particle is actually influenced by the act of observation. While empiricists would like to minimize the impact of the observer by repeating an experiment until some level of validity is reached, the truth is that there is never an ultimate point where the observer has no impact. There are only probabilities and likelihoods which become useful (Crotty, 1998; Rhodes, 2012).

The idea of the useful is at the heart of constructionism, an alternative to positivism that emerged from the ashes and chaos of 20th century wars and the end of colonialism. If science has failed to build a perfect society (the original goal of sociology as projected by August Comte), if the enterprise of the great colonial powers has been rejected as an immoral, cruel and unsustainable, and if progress (however it is defined) is not inevitable, then how do we develop common understandings of reality that can hold society together (Geertz, 1973; Crotty, 1998)?

Constructionism provides a bridge between a purely subjective understanding of the world, where every individual creates their own meaning, and the positivist view of discovering objective truths through scientific inquiry. Crotty says (1998) that “According to constructionism, we do not create meaning. We construct meaning. We have something to work with. What we have to work with is the world and objects in the world” (p. 44). He goes on to point out that for constructionists, it is in the interplay of subject and object, in the “radical interdependence of subject and world,” that “meaning is born” (p. 45).

Given the current skepticism towards science (which has brought us both technological progress and the threat of apocalypse) and the abusive history of colonialism, attempting to describe a particular culture may seem risky and even inappropriate. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, one can return to the concept of what is useful. Crotty point out that,

“What constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is *no* true or valid interpretation. There are useful interpretations, to be sure, and these stand over against interpretations that serve no useful purpose. There are liberating

interpretations too: they contrast sharply with interpretations that prove oppressive. There are even interpretations that may be judged fulfilling and rewarding-in contradistinction to interpretations that impoverish human existence and stunt human growth. ‘Useful’, ‘liberating’, ‘fulfilling’, ‘rewarding’ interpretations, yes. ‘True’ or ‘valid’ interpretations, no” (p. 47-8).

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) was central in moving the study of cultures from positivistic roots towards constructionist (or social constructionist) interpretations of culture. His language today may seem a little outdated (influenced as it is by the psychological terminology of B. F. Skinner and other cultural artifacts of the 1960s). In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz advocates cross-sector thinking in anthropology, looking for connections where “. . . biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural factors can be treated as variables within unitary systems of analysis” (p. 44). Geertz transitioned anthropology from the idea that humans produce culture over a period of time to the idea that humans receive culture, and in particular “significant symbols,” from the social settings and institutions in which they participate. These symbols include,

“. . . words for the most part but also gestures, drawings, musical sounds, mechanical devices like clocks, or natural objects like jewels-anything, in fact, that is disengaged from its mere actuality and used to impose meaning upon experience. From the point of view of any particular individual, such symbols are largely given. He finds them already current in the community when he is born, and they remain, with some additions, subtractions, and partial alterations he may or may not have had a hand in, in circulation when he dies. While he lives he uses them . . . to put a construction upon the events through which he lives, to orient

himself within ‘the ongoing course of experienced things,’ to adopt a vivid phrase of John Dewey’s” (p. 45).

Geertz spends considerable time contrasting his approach to that of positivists of his day who embraced a scientific, analytic approach to understanding culture (Swidler, 1986). He says, “The cognitive fallacy-that culture consists . . . of ‘mental phenomena which can . . . be analyzed by formal methods similar to those of mathematics and logic’- is as destructive of an effective use of the concept as are the behaviorist and idealist fallacies to which it is a misdrawn correction” (p. 12). In contrast, Geertz defines culture as “. . . essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (1973, p. 5).

The method Geertz embraces for studying culture is ethnography, but not what he terms *thin description* that focuses on describing actions and behaviors, but *thick description*, which takes into account context, history and the interpretive standpoint of the ethnographer. Geertz finds common ground with literary criticism and hermeneutics as ways of discovering meaning (Crotty, 1998). Whether or not this meaning can produce generalized descriptions of culture, Geertz is clear but careful to not fall into the traps of the positivists (who would generalize and stereotype) or the subjectivists (who would negate any possibility of generalization). Geertz says that theory needs,

“ . . . to stay rather closer to the ground than tends to be the case in sciences more able to give themselves over to imaginative abstraction . . . The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is, as I have said, to aid us in

gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them” (p. 24).

One form of ethnographic inquiry that is aligned with Geertz’ idea of thick description is grounded theory. As first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory uses the data collected through interviews, examination of artifacts and other ethnographic techniques to ensure that “. . . the theory emerging arises from the data and not from some other source” (Crotty, p. 78). While Glaser and Strauss began with a purely inductive approach, Strauss and Corbin (1998) reflect the evolution of grounded theory towards an approach welcoming to a variety of theoretical viewpoints, and one that embraces deductive as well as inductive methods.

A practitioner of grounded theory, James Spradley published influential ethnographies and guides to ethnographic methodology, including *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979) and *Participant Observation* (1980). Spradley, following in the footsteps of Franz Boas, emphasizes the importance of accurately capturing the labeling and classification systems cultures use to describe their worlds. This school of ethnography, called ethnosemantics, understands that from a semiotic perspective, an ethnographer has to test and retest their understanding of how an interviewee is using terms that may seem, on their face familiar. Because of these subtle differences, Boas saw cultures as “. . . irreducible and incomparable” (Crotty, 1998, p. 76).

Spradley recommends using participant observation, an emic approach, to gathering and interpreting data. He explains,

“The ordinary participant in a social situation usually experiences it in an immediate, subjective manner. We see some of what goes on around us; we

experience our own movements . . . we are the ones engaging in the activities.

In short, we are insiders. Our experience of participating in a social situation takes on meaning and coherence from the fact that we are inside the situation, part of it. The participant observer, on the other hand, will experience both insider and outsider simultaneously” (1980, pp. 56-7).

Depending on the researcher’s personality, research goals and the situation being studied, an ethnographer may opt for lower or higher degrees of involvement as an insider, and even be a passive observer. What makes an ethnographer using participant observation different from a researcher using a purely etic, or outsider, approach is that the participant observer “. . . comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and 2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation” (1980, p. 54). Spradley also recommends reflection, or introspection, as an activity to process the feelings the researcher has as both an insider and outsider.

A significant amount of discussion occurs among ethnographers around the advantages and disadvantages of being a participant observer (Adler & Adler, 1994; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Walford, 2008). Bonner & Tolhurst (2002) report that an ethnographer using a more emic (insider) approach gains trust of those being observed, is more inclined to resist stereotyping, and focuses on fully understanding the meaning of symbols from the perspective of those being studied. On the other hand, the insider may experience role conflicts, will need to take longer to develop trusting relationships, and may struggle to maintain a level of objectivity. While on the surface, the outsider (etic) approach may seem more objective, the researcher, because of a lack of trusting relationships, may have difficulty testing the validity of responses to see if they truly

reflect the insider meanings of those being studied (p. 13).

Spradley also encourages ethnographers to focus on social situations, which involve three elements: actors, place and activities. The detailed description of these elements, while not exhaustive, serve as a “springboard for understanding” (1980, p. 40). In *Participant Observation* (1980), Spradley expands this list to nine different dimensions of social situations, including space, object, act, activity, event, time, actor, goal, and feeling (pp. 82-3). These elements are cross-referenced into a “descriptive question matrix.” For example, a descriptive question about time and objects would be “How are objects used at different times?” (p. 83). Spradley compares an ethnographer to a map-maker who is beginning to map the features of a deserted island. One starts with observations, and gradually, through an iterative process, features begin to emerge that may have relationships. The matrix, while containing some descriptive questions that may not be useful in every situation, can assist the ethnographer in “. . . checking your own thoroughness” (p. 81).

Using ethnographic methods is a possible way of understanding the sources of cultural misunderstandings, and to take advantage of cultural relationships among cross-sector partners supporting community schools (Thornton & Garrett, 1995; Walford, 2008; Shonk, 2020). For example, a participant from one sector may be used to seeing written and detailed agendas for every meeting, and even expect that these agendas will be sent beforehand for review. Another participant, perhaps from a community organizing background, may find detailed agendas slightly offensive, and see them as a way for a few people to control the larger group. Still another participant may resent any waste of paper and see paper agendas as environmentally irresponsible. Understanding how

participants interpret this particular artifact, the agenda, can help the cross-sector team find a useful common ground for productive work.

One question that needs to be addressed as we seek to reduce conflict and increase understanding in cross-sector partnerships, is whether it is possible, or even helpful, to think in terms of macro-cultures such as school culture, healthcare culture, business culture, funder culture or nonprofit culture. Can one even say that there is a particular public (or private) school culture? A researcher could gather various books that are used by programs that train school superintendents, for instance, and look for common terms or themes. The design of school buildings, course sequence and curriculum, teacher certification, the length of the school day . . . all of these cultural elements are fairly uniform, partly because of standardization in U. S. public education that occurred during the 20th century (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Health accreditation standards, as well as public expectations, have produced standardized cultural elements across healthcare (Allensworth et al., 1997; Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). However, businesses cover a wide range of cultural situations, from small retail businesses to large multi-national corporations (Schein & Schein, 2017). Nonprofits are also diverse, though there are cultural commonalities, reinforced through graduate programs, nonprofit collaboratives and funder expectations, that can be identified (Teegarden, Hinden, & Sturm, 2011). Higher education also has its own identifiable cultural elements that are significantly different from primary and secondary schools (Pescosolido & Aminzade, 1999).

Schein and Schein (2017) emphasize that group culture is not only a shared product but is also developed through a shared process (p. 6). It develops over time, becomes the “. . . gestalt that ties together the various elements at a deeper level,” and is

passed on to new group members through a process of socialization (p. 11). Whether a particular occupation (or for that matter, a community organization or neighborhood) has a culture (called a macro culture by Schein and Schein) depends on whether that entity has ways of passing along and reinforcing cultural norms, as well as some definition of membership. For example, becoming a teacher involves going through an approved training program, receiving a state license, and successfully navigating a hiring process. Becoming a healthcare professional also involves a long process of cultural socialization, with cultural and professional norms that allow the worker to move from place to place, knowing that the culture will be similar wherever he or she goes. Edward Hall, in *Beyond Culture* (1976), defines cultures as high-context and low-context. High-context cultures are very relational and stable, with unwritten rules that are difficult for a newcomer to discern. This might be seen in a school with very low turnover, making it difficult for new teacher to discern how things are done. Low-context cultures have precise and explicit rules that are openly expressed, and generally tend to be fluid. A school in a low-income community with high staff turnover might be low-context, with extensive training provided to integrate new staff into the cultural expectations at the school.

Schein and Schein also point out that, while an individual may be part of an organization, occupation or business that has a macro culture, they may also be part of other subcultures (similar to Hiebert's idea of cultural frames) that operate with different cultural norms:

“But any group that has a shared task, more or less constant membership, and some common history of learning together will have its own subculture as well as being nested in the culture of the organizational unit it is in and in the

macro cultures of the occupations of its members, the organization, and the nation” (2017, p. 29).

For example, a school is part of a number of nested macro cultures, including a school district, state educational system and federal education system. Within any school district, each campus will have its distinctive subculture that has developed over a period of years as a shared experience between staff.

In understanding the macro-, micro- and subcultures any individual taking part in a cross-sector partnership may represent, Schein and Schein (2017) point out the following considerations:

1. *How do these cultures think about the nature of physical and social reality?*

For example, one person’s culture may be positivistic, oriented towards scientific approaches to social change that can be measured and replicated. Another person may be focused on a critique of power and how the community constructs its own reality.

2. *Does this culture approach change through a moralistic or a pragmatic lens?*

One member of the group may be focused on what works, while another is concerned about doing things the right way, even if is less efficient.

3. *Where does a culture’s information come from? What is valued?* Some may put an emphasis on compiling data, while others are listening to received knowledge and wisdom. How does a culture verify information? Who are the trusted conduits of information?

4. *How does the culture view time, including its orientation towards the past, present and future?* Some cultures value the past more than others. Some may be future-oriented. Different organizations and occupations organize themselves themselves around

cycles of time, including fiscal years, corporate financial quarters, school years, testing schedules and even a daily bell schedule on a campus. Cultures will feel a different sense of urgency to finish tasks in a certain amount of time. Some focus on short-term planning, others on long-term planning. Tasks may be linear for one culture, while another allows for multiple tasks occurring in one period of time.

5. *How does the culture conceptualize of space?* An organizational culture may have individual spaces, such as offices, or work communally in common areas. Some spaces may indicate status, including board rooms and certain social spaces, such as members-only clubs. Cultures valuing group meetings and interaction may be set up differently as compared to a factory floor or separate offices.

6. *How does a culture view people?* Are people clients, co-workers, competitors, collaborators or commodities? Are some people good and some bad? What categories do we use to describe people, and how do we view those categories? What does it mean to be a successful person?

7. *How does a culture view activity?* In a pragmatic culture, doing things and taking action might be more valued than fitting in with others. A culture with internal or external limits on action may value smaller actions or even survival. Some may value an entrepreneurial spirit, while others value obedience and being a good group member.

8. *How does the culture view relationships?* One culture may want to give time for people to get to know one another and build relationships before getting down to work. Another may view that as a waste of time. Schein points out that cultures typically differ in how people of difference status relate and how peers relate.

9. *How does a culture use language?* While people may speak the same language,

cultures and subcultures have distinctive jargon and uses of language that are barriers for outsiders. There may also be unwritten rules about where and when things are said or not said. Words may also have differing interpretations across groups. For example, the word funding would have slightly different connotations for someone from a nonprofit, a school, a funder, a business and a community member.

10. *What is an organization's reason for existence, and how does that affect its relationship with other organizations?* Every organization, whether a school, a hospital, a public agency or a community group, has a reason for existence, sometimes called its mission. Organizations also have less obvious or hidden reasons for existence. Schools exist to educate children and prepare them to be productive adults, but schools also serve as a safe place for children to be during the day while parents are at work. These reasons for existence may overlap, complement or even cause competition between different organizations in a cross-sector partnership.

11. *How does the culture make decisions and set goals?* Decision-making and goal setting can be an area of significant conflict in a cross-sector partnership. Do the cultures represented normally use consensus, voting or even *Robert's Rules of Order* to make decisions? Can one person decide for an organization, or do they have to consult with others?

12. *What are a culture's systems and processes?* The rules and systems an organizational culture uses may be written down, but in most cases, they are unwritten and often poorly understood, even by members of the culture. The success of social change initiatives depends on a deep understanding of systems and processes which may advance or inhibit change. Membership of a coalition may also resist change that

challenges ingrained cultural habits, including systems and processes.

13. *How does a culture measure progress, success or significance?* Most cross-sector collaborations will quickly move towards setting measurable goals as a way to justify the work of the collective. However, cultures will differ on what to measure, how to measure, what to do when corrections are needed, and how to deal with outcomes that are important but are difficult to measure (Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2010; Schein & Schein, 2017).

14. *How does a culture deal with change, failure and problems?* Most problems are multi-faceted, but the culture in the U. S. often wants to find a simple culprit to blame. It may be the teacher, the parent, the elected official, the poor, the Democrats, the Republicans, or a host of other scapegoats. Strategic actions by cross-sector collaboratives are often determined by a hasty root cause analysis of problems, leading to wasted time and resources with little result. Some cultures may be also oriented towards improvement, while others prefer to maintain the status quo. Schein and Schein (2017) point out that a whole “change management” field has emerged, based on case studies of organizational success, but that there is little agreement between the different models (p. 168). A parallel can be seen in the school improvement industry, with many approaches, including community schools, proposed, each having their own champions and cultures.

15. *How does a culture define group boundaries and rules for inclusion?* In an organizational culture, this may be the rules for hiring. In a community, it may be the unwritten rule about how long someone needs to live in the community to be recognized as a group member. People are also members of multiple groups and cultural frames. How important are these overlapping identities to them?

16. *How does a culture view power, influence, authority, status and manners?*

Cultures may differ greatly in how they view leadership, as well as who is respected and who is not. There may also be various symbols and actions associated with status, as well as with social politeness, that are important in reducing conflict and building collaboration (Goffman, 1967).

These questions generated by Schein and Schein give us insight into the many ways that members of a cross-sector collaboration bring different cultural understandings to the table. While reading the literature about school, health, corporate, nonprofit or other cultures may be of help in seeing the world through another culture's eyes, perhaps the best way to reduce conflict and increase collaboration in a cross-sector initiative is to use ethnographic methods to increase cultural understanding among partners. Also, using a culturally adept bridge organization, or intermediary, to help the cultures mesh together in productive and positive ways can help a collaborative problem-solve and move past cultural conflicts (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Pittinsky, 2009; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011).

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

From the review of the literature around cross-sector partnerships that support community schools, it is clear that creating and sustaining these partnerships is challenging. While some of the lessons learned about bringing together cross-sector collaborations in the business, government, health or other sectors may be informative and applicable, the research around education-specific collaboratives, and especially the role organizational cultures play in the success or failure of these collaboratives, is minimal. The Wallace studies in 2015 and 2016 highlighted the need for researchers to address the difficulties education-specific cross-sector collaborations experience in attempting to improve education and social outcomes.

In considering the most useful methodologies for this study, I am aware of several considerations:

1. This study of cross-sector collaborations supporting community schools is plowing new ground, rather than reinforcing past work or examining a particular point in greater detail. Because of this, I will be using methods that may reveal questions and hypotheses that can be used in future research rather than aiming for a conclusive and finished investigation.

2. This study is working from a hypothesis that has been developed over more than a decade of personal experience in the field: *The effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships that support community schools are based, to a great degree, on the level of understanding that organizational partners have of each other's cultures, and the ways that they are able to navigate each other's cultural differences to jointly*

implement successful community school strategies. After a honeymoon phase of group formation, partners will either find ways to mesh the gears of their organizational cultures or they will settle into their old patterns of working separately and sometimes competitively.

3. For the purposes of this study, there is no right or wrong organizational culture. There is simply the reality of “what is.” Someone might see a particular aspect of culture as not helpful, or even as a barrier to success, and another person might feel differently. Culture is developed over a long period of time and always for a reason. That history and those reasons may be poorly understood by both insiders and outsiders of a particular culture.

4. While this study will reveal interesting and potentially helpful information about the collaborations being examined, what is learned about the research process may be even more helpful and applicable to other collaborations. My goal is to test various methods, including ethnographic and ethnolinguistic techniques, which can then be adopted by others working on similar projects.

Ethnographic research is not new to me, and I have a somewhat unique experience that informs the current study. As discussed in chapter 1, I was able to take a semester break in 1986 from teaching high school English to be part of a team of graduate students working on a five-month ethnographic research project in south Asia. I previously had no interest in that part of the world and had never heard of ethnography. The opportunity came from a chance conversation that led to an interview and an opportunity. The reason that I was selected for the team was that I was an experienced writer and had intuitively done ethnographic work in an inner-city African American

community where I taught, spending many hours learning history and listening to resident's stories.

The five-month project in South Asia powerfully changed the way I understand culture. During a training period leading up the project, we studied the ethnographic methodology developed by James Spradley, as well as concepts of cross-cultural meaning making that are used in international development. These included the importance of taking on the roles of listener and learner, as well as giving research time to evolve. In our action-oriented society, our cultural norm is to sit in a room, develop a mission statement, goals and strategies, and then start working, assuming we all understand the target culture we are serving. While this is not unheard of in international development, the realities of working cross-culturally have developed habits that produce healthier and more sustainable collaboration.

The importance of being patient and giving the research time to evolve was especially important to the south Asian project. The first month was spent in walking the streets, observing and finding informants. The city where we worked had only rudimentary maps, with many of the alleyways and smaller streets unmapped. These were areas that tourists would not usually venture into and where local people would not need a map to find their way. Most residences lacked specific addresses. By the end of the first month, we felt like we had gotten to know a few informants, but the work was painfully slow. By the end of the project, however, our knowledge and our relationships had grown exponentially. We had gained the trust of many people, and we had listened enough to begin asking meaningful questions. The last two weeks of research were equal to the first two months of work in the amount that we learned.

Research Questions

The research questions proposed in this study emerge from 15 years of working in cross-sector collaboratives:

1. How do different organizational cultures, including campus and school district cultures, affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives? In particular, how is the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships in community schools affected by the level of understanding that partners have of each other's cultures and the ability of partners to navigate cultural differences?

This research question is the primary focus of study. In addition, a related question will be explored:

2. How do cross-sector partnerships supporting community school initiatives measure success?

Research Design and Methodology

In qualitative research, we have a number of tools at our disposal. Observation, examination of artifacts and documents, and surveys all allow for an outsider (or 'etic') understanding of a social situation or culture. To truly gain an 'emic' (or insider) understanding, we need to hear from actors within the culture through interviewing. As Michael Patton (2002) states, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (p. 341). A good interviewer allows the interviewee to frame the world, to provide the

language and categories for the topic at hand, and to move past the preconceptions of the interviewer. James Spradley (1979) says, “I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them” (p. 34). Spradley uses the term “domains” to describe the terms or categories that an interviewee uses to describe their world. This approach “ensure(s) that the theory emerging arises from the data and not from some other source” (Crotty, 1998, p. 78).

I have debated whether this study should be termed a case study that uses ethnographic methods, a formal ethnography or even an action research project. My conclusion is that it has elements of all three approaches. There is considerable discussion among researchers as to the difference between case studies and ethnographies. Both ethnography and case studies examine cultures, may study a phenomenon or phenomena in-depth, and may focus on a particular group (though a case study could also be focused on an individual, while an ethnography would, by definition, focus on a social scene). Court (2003) defines the main distinction between the two methods as being the purpose or “intention” of the study. She says, “Ethnography is inward looking, aiming to uncover tacit knowledge of culture participants. Case study is outward looking, aiming to delineate the nature of phenomena through detailed investigation of individual cases and their contexts” (para. 1). Court goes on to draw other distinctions, including the boundedness of case studies, with the focus on a particular event, situation or person, compared to ethnographies, which are “thick descriptions” of groups or cultures and can take significantly longer than case studies. Case studies may also use a variety of

phenomena, including documents and other artifacts, while ethnographies use participant observation and interviews as the primary means of data collection (Stake, 1995; Patton, 2003). Perhaps one reason that there is some confusion differentiating ethnographies and case studies are the origins of both methods. Ethnographies arose from anthropology (Patton, 2003; Fusch et al., 2016). Case studies, on the other hand, have been the province of the behavioral sciences and business (Stake, 1995; Patton, 2003; Yin, 2014). For some, anthropology has associations with colonialism and positivism, though ethnography and the case study approach are both strongly rooted in constructionism and constructivism (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2003). Ethnography also has strong ties to linguistics, primarily through the work of anthropologist Kenneth Pike, who developed the field of ethnolinguistics in the 1930s and 40s (Hymes, 1980).

For practical purposes, the main difference between an ethnography and a case study is the unit of study. Bernard (1995) states that the unit of study for an ethnography is the community, tribe or group, while a case study may describe a moment in time, a program or anything that can be bounded and defined (Stake, 1995). In practice, there is significant overlap between the two approaches. Fusch, Fusch and Ness (2017) describe an approach called a mini-ethnographic case study (or a focused ethnography) that is useful when one needs to reduce the timeframe needed for a systematic ethnography. It also allows the blending of approaches, including using both ethnographic interview methods as well as examination of other materials, including documents and artifacts. This design made the most sense for my study, since I examined a number of cultural settings at once over a period of time and wanted to use ethnographic strategies, and in particular a semantic approach to ethnography, to gather most of my data.

The study used the methodology developed by James Spradley, along with insights and questions used by researchers interested in organizational culture, such as Schein and Schein (2017) and Teegarden, Hinden and Sturm (2011), who have studied nonprofit organizational culture. Spradley uses a four-part process, including selecting a problem, collecting data, analyzing data and formulating hypotheses, which can occur in a progressing but also cyclical manor. Spradley explains, “Ethnography all begins with the same general problem: What are the cultural meanings people are using to organize their behavior and interpret their experience?” (1979, p. 93). During the process of collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher develops hypotheses about what things mean and how people act upon those meanings, all of which are created by using symbols. As Spradley explains, “A symbol is any object or event that refers to something. All symbols involve three elements: the symbol itself, one or more referents, and a relationship between the symbol and the referent” (1979, p. 95). An example of a symbol might be St. John’s Avenue near Webb Middle School. A transportation official might describe the street as transportation route between x and y, a long-term resident might describe the street as a meeting place for conversations and the police might describe it as a crime hotspot. It’s the same physical place, but people attach a variety of meanings to the symbol.

Not understanding the meaning participants attach to symbols limits the effectiveness of education collaboratives. For example, everyone thinks they know what schools are and how then function, but they are bringing with them a variety of symbolic meanings that cause miscommunication and conflict. In fact, participants are ignorant of the most basic understanding of each other’s organizational cultures that would help

further successful collaboration. A researcher may say the word “budget” and get a wide range of meanings and associations from the group. Being “in charge” of something may have drastically different meanings from one organization to the next, especially when comparing a relatively flat organizational structure and a hierarchical structure. A collaborative member representing an informally organized neighborhood organization may, in fact, be representing multiple constituencies without being fully aware. These examples and many more demonstrate the importance of cultural understanding in education collaboratives.

Spradley’s methods can also be used to study the meetings of the collaboratives themselves and the processes that lead up to the meetings. What are the expectations of group members around the term “meeting”? What are the components of a successful meeting? Is an agenda required? Is it printed and distributed beforehand? How is the meeting facilitated? How does decision-making occur? The term “meeting” itself is a symbol of a host of meanings that each collaborative member carries with themselves from their organizational (and other) cultures, and each member will leave meetings feeling more or less satisfied based on how the meeting met their cultural expectations.

In *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), Spradley describes four types of ethnographic analysis that build on one another. The first type of analysis is domain analysis, which is “a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge” (p. 94). “Cover terms” that describe categories of knowledge are discovered through the coding of interviews. An example Spradley gives of a cover term would be “tree”, which describes a large number of “included terms” such as oak tree, poplar tree and so on. A cover term in an organization might be “employee” with included terms being various kinds of

employees. As the researcher feels confident that domains, including cover terms and included terms, are being described in a way that is meaningful and accurate for the interviewees, the next step is to organize the terms into taxonomies that describe the semantic relationships between the terms. While not exclusive of other possibilities, Spradley provides a list of common semantic relationships, including strict inclusion (x is a kind of y), spatial (x is a place in y), cause-effect, rationale (x is a reason for doing y), location for action, function (x is used for y), means-end, sequence and attribution (x is a characteristic of y). The final steps of analysis are componential analysis and theme analysis. Componential analysis is looking more deeply into particular terms, with meaning developed by contrasting a term with other similar terms. Theme analysis is looking for “. . . any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning . . . Themes are assertions that have a high degree of generality. They apply to numerous situations. They recur in two or more domains” (Spradley, 1979, p 186). For example, a theme in an organizational culture may be that a particular gender is advantaged or disadvantaged over another in most situations. Cultures may have themes around how power is acquired and maintained, or how conflict is resolved (p. 200-201).

Spradley also offers helpful types of questions and questioning techniques that I have used successfully in past interviews. These include descriptive and contrast questions, both of which allow for open-ended responses. He provides several examples of descriptive questions, including grand-tour, mini-tour, example, experience and language questions. The grand-tour and mini-tour questions, in particular, have been very helpful in my past work. The researcher might ask, after establishing a social setting that

is important to the informant, “Could you describe to me what it is like in this place (or time)?” An example in this study might be, “Could you describe a typical faculty meeting to me?” Further questions would continue to draw out details and explore meanings.

Contrast questions are also helpful, and are used later in the ethnographic process, as the researcher has established cover and included terms. An example might be, “How are a teacher’s duties different from an administrator’s duties?”

Card sorting is also helpful and was used in the study. In a school setting, card sorting could be used to explore a cover term “staff at a campus” and various relationships between the included terms in that domain. With each staff role written on a separate card, the interviewee would be asked to sort the cards in whatever manner makes sense to them. They might place them in groups by “who works the hardest” or “who works together with whom” or a number of other different ways. Each sort provides information about semantic relationships and provides insight into what meanings are important to the interviewee. Card sorting is also helpful in thematic analysis as a way to see connections between various domains of meaning.

Finally, while Spradley (1980) identifies three main components in every social setting, namely place, actor and activities, he has also identified six other dimensions that are useful in formulating descriptive questions, “. . . for a total of nine major dimensions of every social situation”: space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal and feeling (p. 78). These dimensions, cross-referenced as a matrix of possible questions in *Participant Observation*, offer the interviewer an incredibly helpful checklist of possible questions, such as “what are all the places events occur,” cross-referencing events and space, or “which actors are linked to which goals” (1980, pp. 82-83).

While the techniques and model Spradley developed were the foundation for my approach in this study, I also leaned on insights from Schein and Schein (2017), Hess (1999), Walford (2008), Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006), Bolman and Deal (2011) and Pescosolida and Aminzade (1999) in developing questions and hypotheses. Hess' model comparing different community change strategies was especially helpful in understanding distinctions between community-based and more institutional partners involved in cross-sector partnering.

Participants

The study focused on participants from three collaborations that were formed over the course of 15 years of community school development in Austin. All three collaborations emerged from the work at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School (now called Northeast Early College High School), with overlapping partners and purposes. These collaborations include:

- A group of cross-sector partners who focus on supporting the Northeast feeder pattern of campuses and communities. The group meets monthly and has existed in some form since 2006. Currently, it meets at two middle school campuses with approximately 30 organizations participating, along with community volunteers and campus staff members. In Spring, 2021, this group worked together to submit a federal Promise Neighborhood grant application.
- A city-wide group of cross-sector partners that was formed in 2015 to support the growth of community schools in Austin. This collaboration, formed with the support of the mayor's office, has struggled to move past the initial formation and strategic planning phases.

- A new group of cross-sector partners that formed in late 2020 as a steering committee to implement a seven-year plan to expand community schools to most of Austin's Title 1 campuses. Austin Voices is acting as the intermediary organization for the plan, as defined by the Coalition for Community Schools scaling up process (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011).

An initial 90 minute interview was conducted with interviewees drawn from the following categories: city and county elected officials, faith-based organizations, community volunteers and civic organizations, funders and foundations, health clinics and hospitals, higher education, large citywide nonprofits, local businesses, neighborhood-based community organizers, public health, public safety, school board trustees, school campus-level staff, school district-level staff, social services agencies, and youth services nonprofits. There were seven initial interviews. All interviews were coded and transcribed by myself using transcription software and manual coding.

Questions in initial interviews focused on the following eight areas, using open-ended descriptive questions: organization and tasks, affiliations, role, collaborative style, group values, view of community, measuring success and understanding of schools. Most of the areas were covered in every interview, and common themes and terms emerged.

The first round of interviews took two weeks to complete, including transcription. Coding and analysis took another three weeks to complete. Follow-up mini-interviews with three of the interviewees were used to confirm domains, use contrast questions and use card sorting to explore relationships between terms that supported the construction of taxonomies.

At the end of the data collection, coding and analysis processes, hypotheses and

themes were formulated, and were compared to what has been found in the literature on organizations and collaboratives. Journaling was helpful throughout the writing process.

At the end of the approximately two-month period of data collection and writing, I did not have, nor did I expect, to have anything approaching a formal ethnography of the collaborative(s), which would be a process that could take many more months by a larger team to complete. What I did produce were preliminary results that were in some ways surprising, and will be useful as action research, or research meant to make some social change (Patton, 2002; Stringer, 2014). In addition, I gained a deeper knowledge of the ways that different participants in cross-sector collaboratives make meaning and understand themselves, their organizations, each other and the collaboratives themselves. Finally, and most importantly, I uncovered new directions to investigate and questions to answer as we seek to make our collaborations effective.

The Role of the Participant Observer

As a researcher who has participated as a key member of the cross-sector collaboratives being studied, I began with a foundation of experience that could be both a help and an obstacle. Many ethnographers have studied social scenes of which they are an active part. The advantages are many, including knowing a large pool of people who can be informants. A disadvantage can be that familiarity makes you less aware of the tacit rules that are present in a social scene. Spradley observes that “The participant observer . . . seeks to become explicitly aware of things usually blocked out to avoid overload. Increasing your awareness does not come easily, for you must overcome years of selective inattention” (1980, p. 55).

While participant observation always has some risk of researcher bias, this threat

was minimized through triangulation of research data, including using consistent protocols, going back to interviewees for confirmation of meanings in the latter stages of the research and using multiple sources of information and respondents for each organization where possible (Fusch, Fusch & Ness, 2017).

Data Capture, Coding and Analysis

Given the necessities imposed by the current pandemic, interviews were virtual and recorded using a video meeting platform, which also provided audio capture. Professional transcription software was used. Coding was done using the transcription software, as well as manually.

Three kinds of notes were used during the research process, including methodological notes (memos to capture process observations and ideas/discussions about coding and theme analysis), theoretical notes (further research into the literature as various themes emerge), and journaling (personal notes with reflection on my role as a participant observer) (Spradley, 1979; Richardson & Adams, 2008; Walford, 2008; Saldana, 2013).

The process of data analysis followed Spradley's pattern of domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis and theme analysis. Throughout the process, Spradley's methods were supplemented with insights from Schein and Schein (2017) on organizational cultures, Teegarden, Hinden and Sturm (2011) on nonprofit culture, Hess (1999) and Wolff (2010) on community development and other researchers on government, health, higher education, and school cultures.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher has relationships with all of the participants in the study, and the

researcher disclosed his background with interviewees as part of the the process of being a participant observer. All interviewees gave verbal consent to participate in the research study. Data was confirmed throughout the research process with interviewees. No organization was identified by name (other than AVEY), and respondents were identified by numbers, i.e. interviewee #2. Where it was important for the organization or group to be identified more specifically, descriptive words were used without identifying the group by name. For example, an organization would be identified as “a mentoring nonprofit that has worked in the target community for many years.”

No FERPA or HIPPA data is contained in the study, except aggregate data that has already been released publicly.

IV. CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

Anyone in education will tell you that reflection is a luxury that the demands of the profession rarely allow. This study has allowed me to reflect with long-term partners on 15 years of intense collaborative work rooted in the St. John community, a place poor in things but rich in relationships. This work is not for the faint of heart or those who expect immediate success. A word that came up in virtually every interview was “patience,” meaning the willingness to wait out (and sometimes challenge) the obstacles to positive change in the community and its schools.

Respondents reminded me that, over this decade-and-a-half, there have been at least 20 different short-term and long-term collaborative teams working on aspects of community schools in St. John and nearby communities. Hundreds of local teachers, parents, students, residents and community partners, nonprofits and other organizations have participated in these coalitions, with approximately 40 individuals and organizations taking active roles on multiple teams. In some cases, individual representatives of organizations changed along the way, but the organization (or school) remained a constant.

Respondents also noted that, while there are many challenges that still exist in our efforts to create sustained cross-sector collaborations that result in equitable and excellent community schools, we have had many successes that were only achieved through collaborative partnerships. These include two sustained turnarounds of struggling secondary schools (Webb Middle School and Reagan/Northeast Early College High School) that have received national attention, the creation of habits and traditions,

including events and collaborations, that have been transformative for the community, and new resources for local schools totaling many millions of dollars. Systems of student and family support have been created, including data-tracking, that have significantly reduced student mobility in the community, leading to improved academic outcomes. The graduation rate at Northeast/Reagan Early College High School has improved from 48% (2008) to 99% (2020), and enrollment at both Webb Middle School and Northeast have doubled, allowing for more programs and funding for student supports and enrichment.

It was also clear in interviews that these partnerships and the successes that resulted do not come without a champion and a cultural bridge. In the earliest years, a few of us, including myself and my wife Julie, served as the champions. In 2010, we transitioned to leading Austin Voices which then became the more formalized organizer and bridge-builder for the St. John collaboratives. Because of our own experiences, we were solution-focused problem solvers who valued grassroots participation and voice. From the beginning, we recognized the cross-cultural challenges of this work, including both obvious cultural differences (racial and ethnic) and less obvious differences (geographic, organizational, economic and social class). Power and politics, values, purposes, funding, history, personalities, systems, habits . . . all of these could help or hinder the efforts of the collaboratives to create sustainable community schools.

What follows is as much a reflection as it is a formal study, based on six weeks of conversations with collaborative participants as well as years of thinking that comes when I'm on my daily run, writing in a journal or waking in the middle of the night. As I said at the outset, education only sparingly allows the luxury of reflection. That is unfortunate. New ideas are rarely new and lessons that could be learned from past

experience are ignored. Strategic planning happens in a small room with a few leaders and not in hundreds of small groups of teachers, parents and community stakeholders. We have seen time and time again the richness that comes from collaboration that sets a long and inviting table without restrictions. This collective wisdom and energy is the genius of community schools revealed in this study.

Process

As detailed in chapter 3, Spradley's ethnographic process involves four steps: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis and theme analysis. I will use this structure to order my findings. It is important to remind readers that this is a case study making use of ethnographic techniques and not a formal ethnography.

Ethnographic questioning can be revelatory in this case, especially since the research question I am examining is focused on cultural differences. However, the careful and demanding techniques that ethnography normally uses are not feasible given the time and scope of this study. As Spradley (1980) says, "All ethnography involves adapting strategies for use in particular situations" (p. 133). This study, while allowing participants to reveal meaning in ways found more in ethnography than case studies, does not engage in the kind of "thick description" normally found in ethnographies. Instead, I am looking for just enough information to challenge and illuminate my hypothesis. In the future, given more time and resources, a study using "thick description" would be useful.

Participants and the Interview Process

My original intention was to conduct multiple interviews with 10-15 respondents, drawn from the following categories: city and county elected officials, faith-based organizations, community volunteers and civic organizations, funders and foundations,

health clinics and hospitals, higher education, large citywide nonprofits, local businesses, neighborhood-based community organizers, public health, public safety, school board trustees, school campus-level staff, school district-level staff, social services agencies, and youth services nonprofits. In the end, I was able to conduct multiple interviews with seven participants, all of whom had represented multiple partners over five or more years in the collaboratives being studied.

Respondents were selected using operational construct sampling. According to Patton (2002), operational construct sampling “. . . simply means that one samples for study real-world examples (i.e., operational examples) of the constructs in which one is interested” (p. 239). From a pool of approximately 20 possible respondents, seven were selected who would provide a broad spectrum of organizational cultural experience, and who also had two or more years experience with multiple cross-sector education partnerships, as well as experience working closely with campuses and the school district. Possible respondents were rejected whose experience in partnerships was too limited or who had no direct experience working with schools. Given the limited number of respondents used for this study, it was important that each respondent had extensive experience working in cross-sector education partnerships over a long period of time.

Respondents include the following:

Respondent #1: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for more than 10 years, including work as a high-level health administrator with the school district and as a private sector health leader.

Respondent #2: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for more than 10 years. All of that time has been spent directing a nonprofit mentoring

program working in the St. John area schools.

Respondent #3: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for more than seven years and is the leader of a cross-sector citywide social services collaborative. The participant also coordinated partnerships for the school district prior to their current position.

Respondent #4: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for more than 10 years and is the leader of a citywide health nonprofit organization.

Respondent #5: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for 15 years, first as a school district employee and administrator, and later as a grassroots nonprofit director.

Respondent #6: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for more than 10 years, first as a campus employee and then as a community school director for Austin Voices.

Respondent #7: This participant has worked with the St. John collaboratives for 15 years, supporting the work as a health-focused volunteer and then as a developer of wraparound supports for Austin Voices.

Context of the Study: History of the St. John Community

The St. John community is a historically black low-income neighborhood in northeast Austin, Texas. Founded by African American Baptist pastors in the 1890s, St. John was a refuge for black workers, allowing them a safe place to raise their families while being close enough to Austin to commute to work each day. Half of the community was set aside for small lots sold for \$50 each and half for farming and grazing. An annual week-long revival meeting every summer in St. John brought together thousands of

people from as far away as Waco and San Antonio, and the spiritual roots of the community are evident in the number of churches still active. The revival campgrounds on the edge of the neighborhood are long gone (bought by the city for first a mall and then a community college), but the large St. John Tabernacle in the center of the community still hosts summer revival meetings, as well as weddings and funerals (Weeks, 2007).

By the 1960s, suburban growth on the northern edge of Austin surrounded St. John and a new high school and middle school were built on either side of the community to serve new suburban neighborhoods. St. John continued to lack paved streets, city water and electricity until the late 1970s, when community activists joined with churches and University of Texas faculty to advocate for equitable services. An unforeseen consequence was that St. John homeowners were assessed for the improvements (including sidewalks) in front of their houses. Some families chose to sell their properties to pay the taxes, while others remained with long-term liens on their homes.

In the late 1980s, the first wave of Hispanic immigrant families began to move into St. John, buying abandoned properties and filling in empty lots with inexpensive duplexes. Crime, centered around drugs, began to take over the neighborhood. In the 1990s, St. John Elementary School was torn down to build a Home Depot store along Interstate-35, and no replacement school was planned. The St. John Neighborhood Association President, Ms. Virginia Brown, along with Baptist Pastor Ray Hendricks, organized in the community to advocate for a new wave of services, including a new elementary school. The result was the Pickle Elementary School/St. John Neighborhood Center complex, opened in 2001. Approximately 30 houses in the center of the

community (where most of the drug trade was centered) were razed. The new complex housed the elementary school, a public library, a health clinic, a police substation and a recreation center, with affordable apartments built across the street.

Shortly after the opening of the new complex in St. John, Ms. Virginia Brown died, and with her, a wave of organizing passed as well. Architects had created a model “community school” physically but had not built a collaborative infrastructure for the campus and community partners. The result was five entities (library, health clinic, recreation center, police station and school) working mainly in isolation. The school district technically owned the property and viewed the other partners as “tenants” paying monthly rent on their facility.

Still, the positive effect of the new facility on the community was significant. The drug trade had lost its base of operations. Families were able to move into affordable and clean apartments. Having a new elementary school (named after a white member of Congress with no connection to the community) gave a shot of energy to the neighborhood. And the surrounding park, named Buttermilk after the dairy farming that had gone on there for many years, became a safe place for families to gather.

A New Wave of Organizing: After the death of Virginia Brown, the St. John Neighborhood Association lacked leadership and meetings became more of a time to air grievances than a place to make positive change. In 2003, my wife and I married. I had already been living in the neighborhood and serving as a volunteer coach at Reagan High School. Shortly after we married, a local community development nonprofit began working in St. John, and we started volunteering in the community. Within a few months, I was hired as their lead community developer. Our strategy was to work with existing

groups, including the neighborhood association, and to bring neighbors together to build relationships block by block. Within a year, we had 19 community block leaders who met twice each month and who worked to organize families on two blocks of their street. Leaders began to hold “block parties” which were effective as both an organizing tool and crime reduction strategy. We adopted the house meeting model used by the Industrial Areas Federation as a way of helping neighbors share ideas and set their own priorities.

Over the next two years, the neighborhood successfully lobbied the city for a new health clinic for seniors, produced a history of the community from various notes the neighborhood historian had stored away, held several festivals, including Pioneer Days, celebrating the African American roots of the community, and planned the first HopeFest, a resource fair with live music held at the local high school. The reorganized neighborhood association worked with neighbors on priorities that included cleaning up the community, helping seniors with home repairs and getting drug dealers out of the community. Volunteers were organized to support the local elementary and middle school, and strong relationships were built with the public library, community police officers, public health workers, churches and other community partners.

In 2005, Julie Weeks started a new collaboration called the 78752-23 Health Network. Following the successful effort to bring a senior-focused health clinic to St. John, the coalition brought local and city leaders from Austin Public Health, CommUnity Care and Dell Children’s Hospital together to work on chronic health needs in the St. John and surrounding communities. Initially focused on the high level of asthma among children in St. John, the coalition met regularly for the next three years, tackling other issues including pre-natal care, access to healthcare for the uninsured and health needs of

pregnant and parenting teens. Eventually, the coalition's work was folded into the new Family Resource Centers begun at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School in 2007 and 2008.

2005 also brought a surge of organizing with the impact of Hurricane Katrina in August. Approximately 125 families from New Orleans were settled in St. John. Through the neighborhood association, the block leaders and the health network, we worked together to support these families and connect them into the fabric of the community. 2006 brought the first HopeFest at Reagan High School, with 3,000 residents coming out for a day of resources, food and music as well as the first Unity Walk, with 250 residents marching to support racial unity and support for the community. My wife and I moved on from the community development nonprofit and began to work on our own in the community, continuing to work on strengthening partnerships. In late 2006, the St. John Community School Alliance was formed as a monthly partner meeting to support Pickle, Webb and Reagan.

In January 2007, we learned on the same day that the work in St. John had won recognition by the America's Promise Alliance with its "100 Best Communities in America for Youth" award, with Webb Middle School being featured on NBC's "Today" show. That same evening, neighbors gathered at Webb for an announcement by the Austin ISD Superintendent that Webb would be closed at the end of the year because of missing state accountability measures over three years. What the district did not count on was the level of organization in the community, as well as the presence of a neighborhood association president (myself) who had a strong background in school improvement. The story of saving Webb (and the following efforts at Webb and beyond)

have been recounted in chapter 1 of this dissertation and does not need to be recounted here, except to say that that January night began our journey to discover how a community-based approach, combined with academic reforms, can result in excellent and equitable education in our most struggling communities. The work at Webb and Reagan are rare national examples of schools that have gone from near death to sustained turnarounds (without using tricks like shuffling kids around or turning the school into a magnet or charter).

At the heart of the school improvement work, which is now under the banner of Austin Voices for Education and Youth (where I became executive director in 2010), are partnerships. Although the proverb “It takes a village” may be overused and cliched, it is true. School districts that try to do everything by themselves rarely succeed at sustained change. Resources may be pumped into a school, teachers and leadership may be changed, but the underlying conditions remain the same. Only through partnerships can the conditions that limit the success of low-income students and schools be addressed, including housing, access to healthcare, limited opportunities to have equitable enrichment programs and barriers children and families face. Community Schools takes the best of what we know about teaching and learning and works to make sure that students are in school and ready to learn. Community Schools understand that partners are people, teachers are people, parents are people, students are people. They are not commodities to be measured and quantified. They are human beings that need relationship to thrive.

Over the past 15 years, we have founded over 20 educational coalitions in the St. John and surrounding communities. Some of these have been focused on events or a

short-term grant opportunity. Some are long-term coalitions like the community school alliances that meet monthly, year after year. We have also done similar work in other cities, including El Paso, Houston and Dallas, but this study will focus on the groups that grew out of that early work in St. John and that became tightly focused on that day in January, 2007, when we learned that even though we were judged one of the best communities in America for youth, that was not enough to save our schools from larger tides of educational politics and inequity unless we organized hard and organized smart. The study that follows is an effort to take stock of this work and find ways to strengthen community schools, with the hope that this work can be a reality in more communities.

Domain and Taxonomic Analysis

The study that follows is a case study of the St. John coalition work, using qualitative research strategies gleaned from ethnography. In no way does this study claim to be a complete ethnography, which would take years, not months to complete. However, my own experience has shown me that questioning techniques of ethnography, and in particular those describe in James Spradley's seminal works, *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979) and *Participant Observation* (1980), would be helpful in seeing the research in fresh and revealing ways.

In *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), Spradley describes four types of ethnographic analysis that build on one another. The first type of analysis is domain analysis, which is "a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge" (p. 94). "Cover terms" that describe categories of knowledge are discovered through the coding of interviews. An example Spradley gives of a cover term would be "tree," which describes a large number of "included terms" such as oak tree, poplar tree and so on. A cover term

in an organization might be “employee” with included terms being various kinds of employees. As the researcher feels confident that domains, including cover terms and included terms, are being described in a way that is meaningful and accurate for the respondents, the next step is to organize the terms into taxonomies that describe the semantic relationships between the terms. While not exclusive of other possibilities, Spradley provides a list of common semantic relationships, including strict inclusion (x is a kind of y), spatial (x is a place in y), cause-effect, rationale (x is a reason for doing y), location for action, function (x is used for y), means-end, sequence and attribution (x is a characteristic of y). The final steps of analysis are componential analysis and theme analysis. Componential analysis is looking more deeply into particular terms, with meaning developed by contrasting a term with other similar terms. Theme analysis is looking for “. . . any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning . . . Themes are assertions that have a high degree of generality. They apply to numerous situations. They recur in two or more domains” (Spradley, 1979, p 186). For example, a theme in an organizational culture may be that a particular gender is advantaged or disadvantaged over another in most situations. Cultures may have themes around how power is acquired and maintained, or how conflict is resolved (p. 200-201).

Respondents used certain descriptive words multiple times. Spradley would call these “cover terms.” Some of these terms describe a category that contains other terms, forming a group, of taxonomy. With a more detailed ethnography, these terms would be explored and verified comprehensively. For the purposes of this study, we are looking for insights that help answer the research questions, namely, how organizational cultures

affect the success of cross-sector partnerships in community schools and how these partners measure success.

The following terms were used frequently by respondents (10 or more times): barriers, coalition, collaboration, community, cross-sector partnerships, culture, data, district, education, events, experience, families, focused, funding, grassroots, health, healthcare, hubs, institutional, institutions, mental health, mentoring, mission, messy, money, neighborhood, nonprofit, organization, outcomes, partners, partnerships, physicians, place-based, questions, schools, school district, solving, support, systems, telehealth, testing, volunteers. Each of these terms may be the lead term (cover term) in a domain and/or may be included in more than one domain. Each will have relationships with one or more other terms, forming taxonomies. Also, each term may have different meanings for different respondents. As Spradley explains, each of these terms are symbols, full of meaning for each respondent: “A symbol is any object or event that refers to something. All symbols involve three elements: the symbol itself, one or more referents, and a relationship between the symbol and the referent” (1979, p. 95). An example of a symbol might be St. John’s Avenue near Webb Middle School. A transportation official might describe the street as transportation route between x and y, a long-term resident might describe the street as a meeting place for conversations and the police might describe it as a crime hotspot. It’s the same physical place, but people attach a variety of meanings to it. From my initial analysis of the interviews, I hypothesize starting with the following domains/cover terms:

Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships

Partners/Organizations

Community

Education

Each of these domains covers actions, events, actors, outcomes and relationships described in the interviews. Each one includes other terms and each of these terms has a relationship to the domain. For example, events may be something that coalitions do. Each included term may have subsets of their own, such as “types of events that coalitions do.” If we cannot find a place for a term or idea used frequently by respondents, then that term may describe another domain.

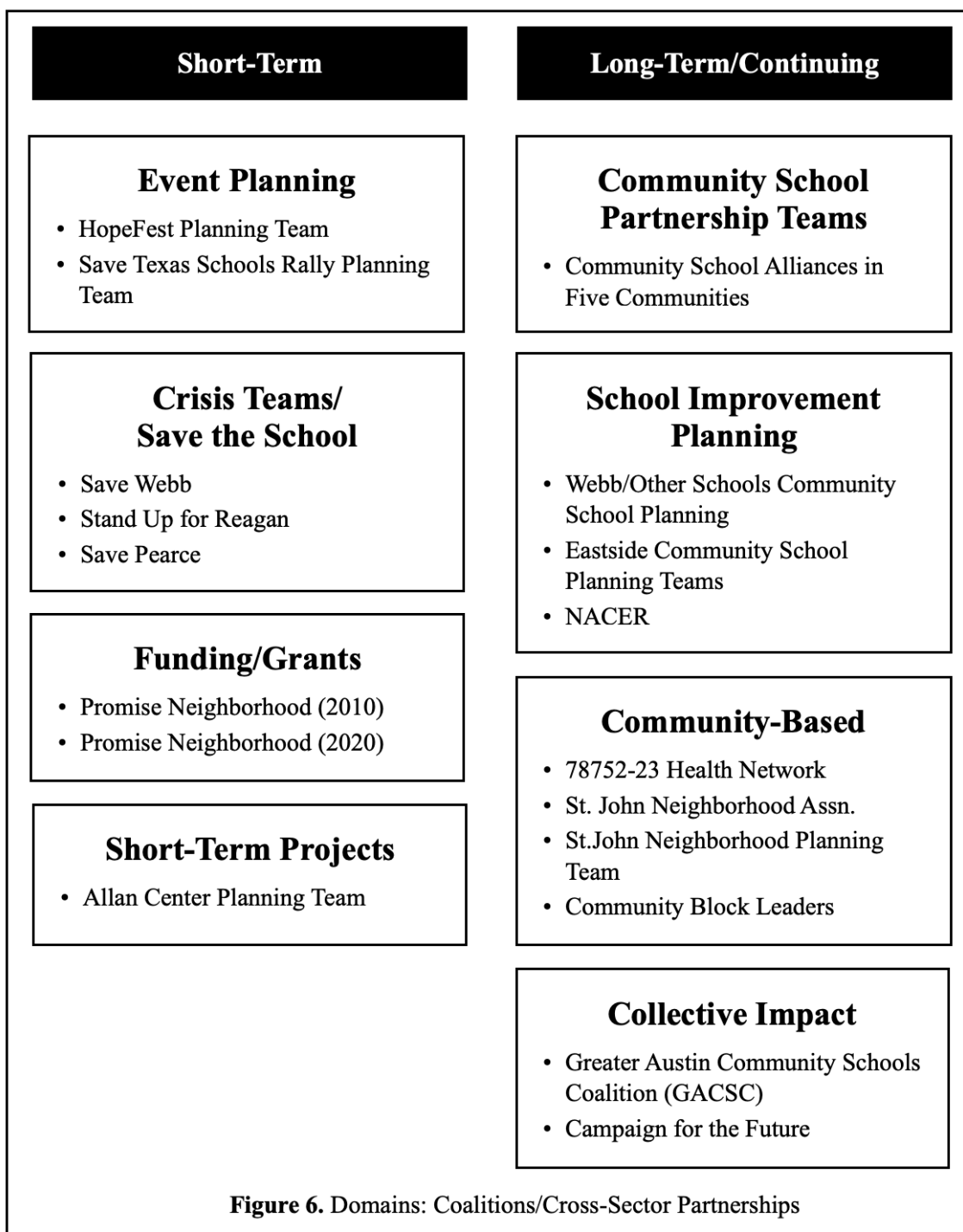
Also, we need to ask if any of these hypothesized domains are similar enough to one another to be combined, or if the distinctions between them are useful enough to maintain as separate categories. Are coalitions and cross-sector partnerships the same thing? This is the kind of distinction that it would be good to confirm with respondents, but initially, I would say that they are not distinct enough to be their own domains.

Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships: Cross-sector partnerships, educational coalitions and alliances form for a number of reasons, including a crisis in a particular neighborhood or school, a funding opportunity, replication of initiatives found in other cities, or grassroots organizing to bring about some needed change. Whatever the case, there is something that must inspire individuals and organizations to attend meetings and do coalition work (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Cannon, 2009) All of the respondents have participated and are participating in multiple education, social service and health coalitions, including those being studied by this project. Some of the benefits mentioned

include “coordinating our approach to community problem-solving,” “identifying opportunities to leverage resources,” “aligning efforts,” “information sharing,” and “making systems function more efficiently and effectively.” Five of the respondents also mentioned the importance of “community voice” and “grassroots participation.” It is notable that not all of the respondents saw community members as necessary participants in coalitions affecting their communities.

There are many possible taxonomies for constructing types of coalitions and cross-sector partnerships. A number of these taxonomies are mentioned in chapter 2 (Ganz Typology of Community Change Efforts (1993); Hess Comparison of Community Change Strategies (1999); Butterfloss & Kegler, (2002); Donahue (2004); Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006); Osmond (2008); Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi & Hermans (2010); Aidman and Baray (2016)) Spradley provides a helpful list of nine dimensions that provide a comprehensive set of descriptive questions for an ethnographer to use: Place/Space (where does x occur?); Objects (what things are used?); actions (what actions are done?); activities (what activities occur?); events (what events occur?); time (when does x occur?); actor (who does x?); goal (what are goals for x?); and feeling (what feelings occur?). Spradley also provides a helpful matrix of questions, cross-referencing all nine dimensions with one another.

Looking back at the past 15 years, most events and activities in the St. John community have involved coalitions working together to plan and implement activities. Respondents identified 21 coalitions, many if not most with an overlapping set of partners. I have constructed a taxonomy based on ways that respondents identified these coalitions:



Using Spradley’s dimension of time, I have mapped coalitions according to whether they are short-term or long-term/continuing in Figure 7, followed by descriptions of each coalition in Table 2:

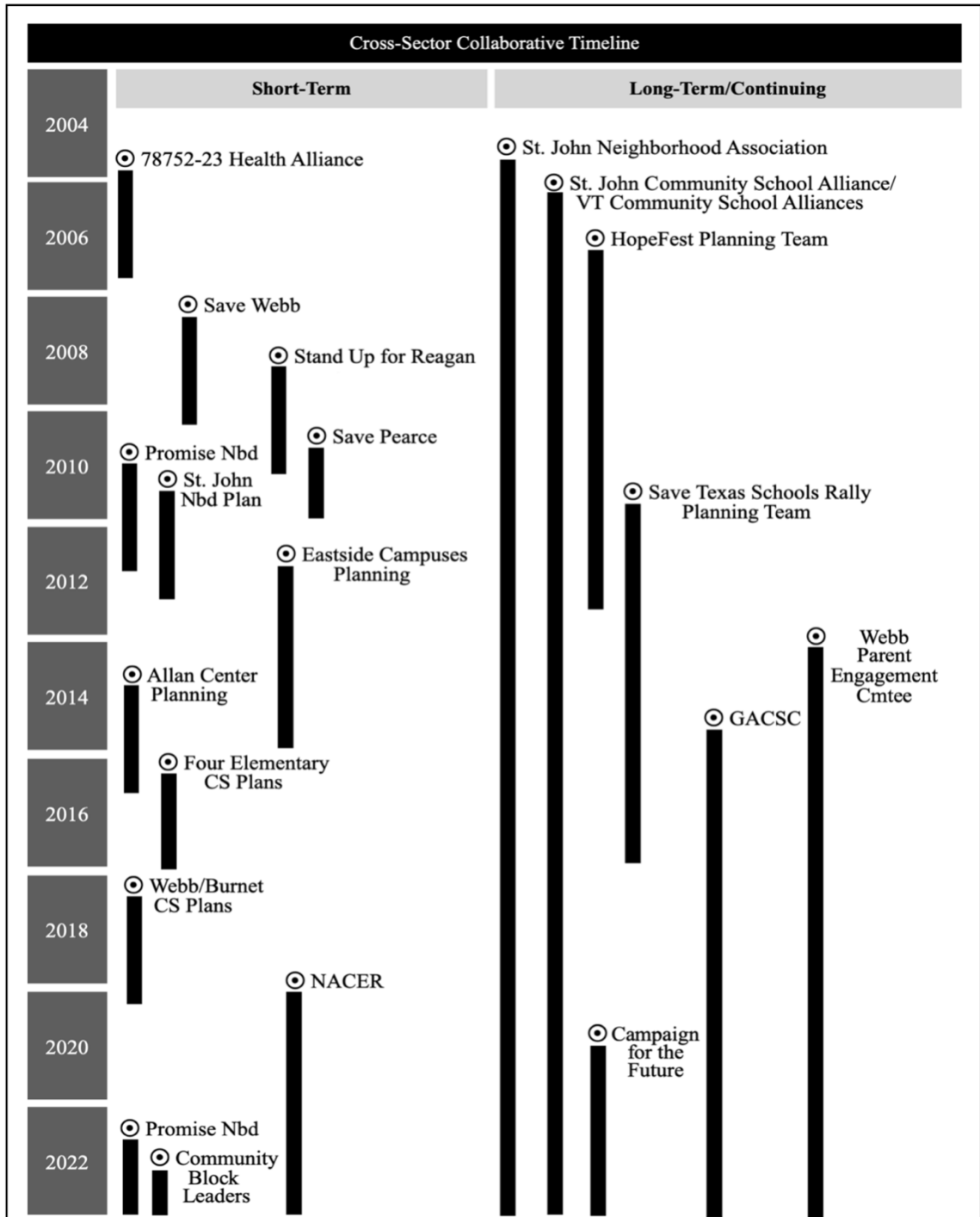


Figure 7. Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships Timeline

Table 2. Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships 2005-2022

| Description | Goals | Outcomes | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|
| 78752-23 Health Network: Local residents, community health leaders and city/county health executives in two zip code areas (10 members). Met monthly with agendas and notes. | Use data to find root causes of chronic health issues for children and adults. | Expanded childhood asthma treatment program, improved uninsured rate, expanded clinic use for diabetes, heart disease | 2005-2008 |
| St. John Neighborhood Association: Local residents meeting monthly. Reformed in 2007, with new bylaws and expanded presence of Hispanic residents. Monthly meetings with agenda and notes. Elected officers. | Community building, liaison with city on issues of concern, planning, events | Expanded participation, clean-ups and service activities, completed nbd. planning process, developed new park, reduced crime | Began 1951. Reformed 2007. Continuing. |
| St. John Community School Alliance: Approx. 30 partners meeting monthly with campus staff to support Pickle, Webb, Reagan/Northeast & T. A. Brown schools. Agendas and notes. Facilitated by AVEY. | Grow partnerships, share information, strategic support, strengthen ties between schools in community | Expanded programs and partners, improved schools, improved systems, new events, advocacy, funding | 2006-present. |
| Other Community School Alliances: Four other alliances were founded (Bumet/Navarro, Dobie, Martin/Eastside, Mendez) with 20-40 attending monthly meetings. Agendas and notes. Facilitated by AVEY. | Grow partnerships, share information, strategic support, strengthen ties between schools in community | All alliances have continued except for Mendez (stopped when Mendez given to new partners). Similar outcomes to St. John. | 2010-present. |
| HopeFest Planning Team: Local churches, volunteers, school staff, residents planned annual HopeFest resource fair at Reagan High School. Weekly meetings for 3-4 months each year. AVEY facilitating and providing funding support since 2010. | Planning, recruiting exhibitors and musicians, fundraising, publicity, logistics | 3,000 to 4,000 attendees annually, with 175 exhibitors in 2020. Built ties between schools and community. Other events (KidsFest, STEAMFest, HarvestFest) have also resulted. | 2006-present. |
| Save Webb: Crisis team formed in 2007 to keep Webb from closing. Approx. 40 St. John residents, working with teachers and principal. | Stop closure of school, write new improvement plan, develop resources, grow long-term advocacy. | Stopped closure, developed first “community school” plan and process, new programs and funding, Family Resource Center. Doubled enrollment. | 2007-2009. (2014 & 2020 to respond to closure threats) |
| Stand Up for Reagan: Crisis team formed in 2008 to keep Reagan from closing. Approx. 150 residents, alumni, teachers, students and partners in 11 teams meeting weekly. | Stop closure of school, write new improvement plan, develop resources, grow long-term advocacy. | Stopped closure, changed state law on closure, developed early college program, Family Resource Center. Doubled enrollment. Grad. rate from 48% to 99% in five years. | 2008-2011 (active). Transitioned to AVEY and NACER in 2018. Continuing. |

Table 2. Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships 2005-2022

| Description | Goals | Outcomes | Duration |
|---|--|--|---|
| Save Pearce: Crisis team formed in 2009 to keep Pearce Middle School from closing. Approx. 30 residents, teachers and partners working together. | Stop closure of school, write new improvement plan, develop resources, grow long-term advocacy. | Delayed closure. School closed and repurposed. Developed improvement plan but not implemented. Family Resource Center (2009-2012). | 2009-2011 |
| Promise Neighborhood Grant (2010): AVEY led citywide effort to get first PN planning grant. St. John selected by planning team. City, county, state officials, nonprofit EDs, school district lead administrators. Monthly meetings with workgroups in between. Agendas and notes, reports, newsletters. | Be awarded \$500,000 PN planning grant for St. John community. Develop other funders for long-term effort. Expand on successes at Webb and Reagan with community schools. | Applications in 2010 and 2012 were not selected for award. Team fundraised \$90,000 for staffing in 2011-12. | 2010-12. Team disbanded after second grant application. |
| St. John Neighborhood Plan: Subset of neighborhood association worked with city for 2 years to write comprehensive 20-year plan for all aspects of neighborhood. Supported by AVEY. | Complete neighborhood plan to guide future zoning and development. | Plan was completed. St. John was next to last neighborhood in Austin to have plan. New park, sidewalks, infrastructure. | 2011-2013. Contact team is still in place. |
| Save Texas Schools Rally Planning Team: Crisis team formed to stop \$10 billion statewide education budget cuts in 2011. Approx. 20 parents on team with AVEY leading. Evolved into statewide team with branches in other cities. Became part of coalition with other statewide education groups (Coalition for Public Schools). | Stop \$10 billion in cuts to education. Later efforts (rallies, conferences, lobbying) focused on reducing testing and expanding community schools. Fundraising for rallies. | Held rallies in 2011 (13,000 people), 2012 (3,000), 2013 (10,000), 2015 (3,000), 2017 (2,500). Reduced budget cuts significantly. Reduced testing. Community School legislation. 4 bills passed. | 2011-2019. Currently on hiatus before next legislative session. |
| Eastside Campuses Planning Teams: AISD asked AVEY to assist turnaround effort at Eastside Memorial and to do community school planning with five other campuses in vertical team. Campus planning teams at six campuses, with teachers, principals, parents, partners. Agendas, notes, vertical team plan, vertical team resource guide. | Successful turnaround at Eastside, improvements in vertical team cohesion/strategic planning, new events, partnerships. | Eastside made state accountability standards, vertical team strategic plan written, new vertical team events, Innovation Academy at Martin, early childhood center at Allan, monthly community school alliance meetings. | 2012-2015 with intermittent efforts continuing. |
| Webb Parent Engagement Committee: This team took over from the Save Webb team to continue community school implementation and planning. AVEY, teachers, assistant principal, Parent Support Specialist meeting monthly to plan activities. | Monthly parent events, increased resources and partnerships, strategic community school planning, coordinated student and family supports. | Successful parent events with large attendance, improved student and family supports, community events (Unity Walk, ENCORE), new programs | 2012-present. |

Table 2. Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships 2005-2022

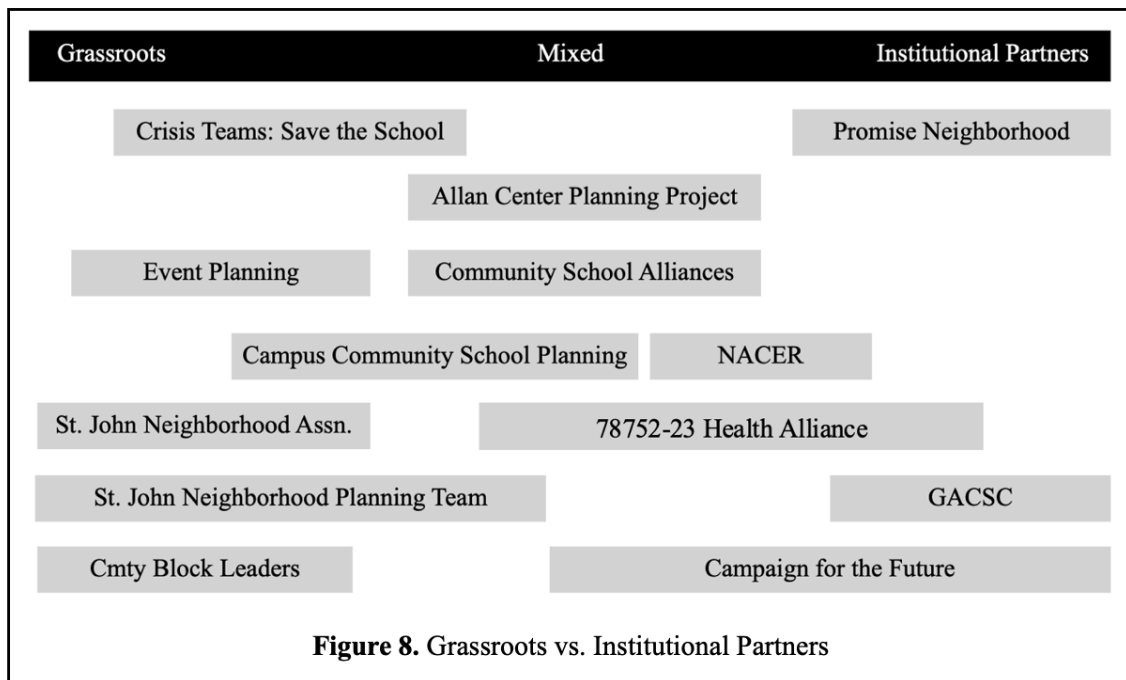
| Description | Goals | Outcomes | Duration |
|--|--|--|---|
| Allan Center planning team: Old Allan Elementary building was given to charter and then taken back in 2013. AVEY led 9-month community process to repurpose building. Large community meetings led to 21 member planning team with parents, community members, teachers/staff and district representatives. | Create a space for healing after contentious charter school fight split community. Agree on uses for the building that would move community in a positive direction. | After extensive process, community agreed on a combined early childhood center staffed by partner agencies and a workforce development program. AVEY facilitated implementation for two years. | 2013-2015. |
| Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC): New Austin mayor formed committee to create bold education initiative. AVEY and other partners advocated for community schools, which was agreed upon. City, county, school district, large nonprofit representatives on initial team of 15. Facilitated by city, then CAN (Community Advancement Network) ED. AVEY supported with planning, research and documentation. | Sustain and expand community schools in the Austin area. Establish a consistent model for implementation. Develop funding base for community schools. | Created initial formation documents. Held two years of quarterly citywide forums to develop strategic planning by program areas. Created logic model. Created initial formation documents. | 2015-2021. Currently on hiatus as team evaluates future plans. |
| Four Elementary Community School Planning Teams: With funding support from Education Austin, AFT and NEA, AVEY developed for elementary school planning teams to develop community schools. Each team (parents, teachers, principal) hosted planning dinners and meetings with 100+ parents taking part. Weekly meetings during school year to develop and implement plans. | Expand community schools in the Reagan Vertical Team to four key elementary campuses. Advocate with district for full-time community school campus coordinators. | Community school plans were completed for four schools, with implementation teams created. Despite promises, the district did not supply funding for community school coordinators. AVEY funded one position for 18 months to support implementation. | 2015-17. Effort folded into NACER project in 2018. |
| Webb/Burnet Community School Planning Teams: In collaboration with AISD, extensive community school planning processes created to support Webb (plan update) and Burnet (plan creation). Parent, teacher, staff planning teams facilitated by AVEY. Planning dinners with 100+ parents held. | Create (Burnet MS) or update (Webb MS) community school plans. Establish implementation teams. | Plans were finalized in 2018 for both campuses, with implementation continuing until COVID in 2020. AVEY supported implementation with FRC staff and community school coordinators. New programs and resources to fill gaps at both schools. | 2017-2019. CS teams continuing. |
| NACER: AVEY wrote 3-year TEA grant to support vertical team community school planning in 2018 for district. NACER core team with Northeast HS, outside consultant (A.I.R.), AISD, CIS, United Way and AVEY. Quarterly partner meetings with 40+ participants, including vertical team representatives. Weekly core team meetings, monthly principal meetings. | Extend community school systems to all vertical team schools, including academic and student/family supports. Coordinate partner planning and events. Expand visibility of community schools in district as a model. | Successful in building stronger relationships between all vertical team campuses. Expanded AVID, FRC supports. Website, referral systems developed. With grant ending and district politics, district staff person was repurposed. AVEY continuing to support NACER. | 2018-2021 (grant). Continuing core team meetings facilitated by AVEY. |

Table 2. Coalitions/Cross-Sector Partnerships 2005-2022

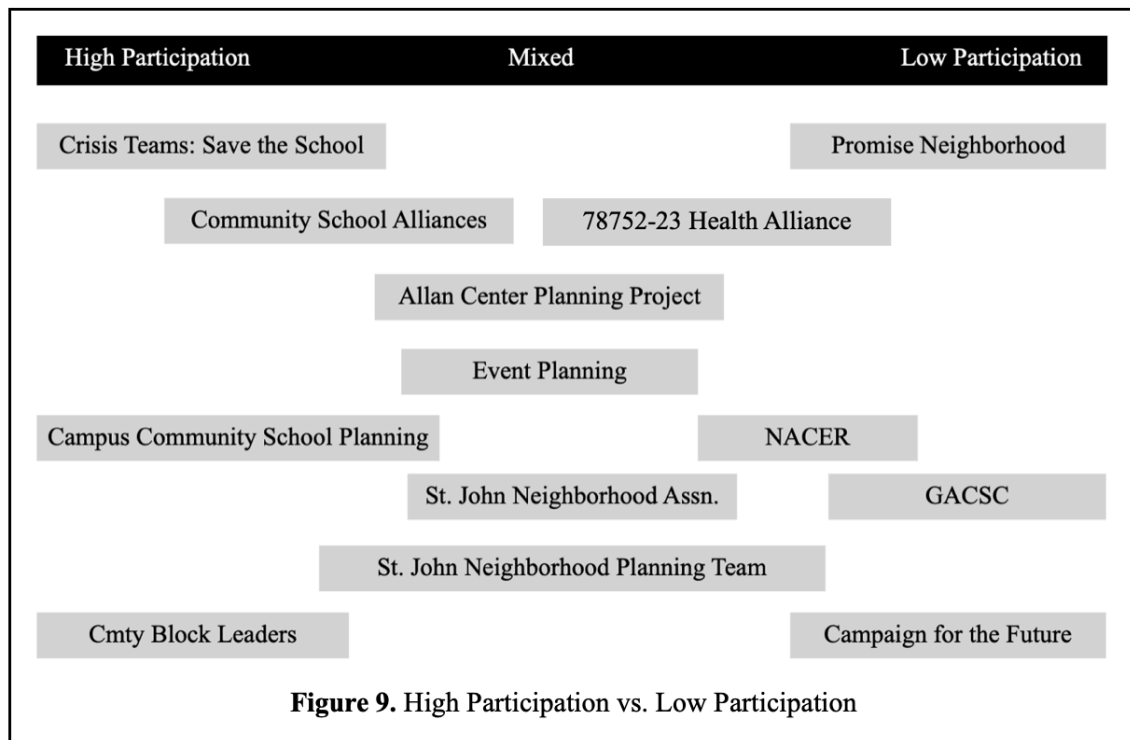
| Description | Goals | Outcomes | Duration |
|--|--|---|---------------|
| Campaign for the Future: In 2019, in light of struggles with GACSC, AVEY began development of a strategic plan to expand community schools to all Title 1 schools in AISD. Core planning team recruited steering committee of 20 people (city/county leaders, AISD, partners, campuses, higher ed, business, parents, community). Met monthly with outside consultant facilitating. Strategic plan completed. | Complete strategic plan for community school expansion. Raising long-term funding support for community schools. Developing program teams (workforce, health, etc.). Developing advocacy at city/county/school district. | 84-page strategic plan completed, including committee revisions. Promise Neighborhood (2021) grant applied for with possible funding in 2022. Continued work by steering committee. | 2019-present. |
| Promise Neighborhood Grant (2021): AVEY developed new PN grant application with 30+ community partners. Quick grant writing process (2 months) was possible because of existing coalitions and partnerships in Northeast Vertical Team, including NACER, community school alliances and Campaign for the Future. Ad hoc meetings, one-on-one meetings and MOUs with partners. | Submit successful Promise Neighborhood grant application, including MOUs from 30+ partners. | Application successfully submitted. Not funded in first round but high score indicates possible second round award in 2022. Further strengthened strategic planning with partners that can be used in Campaign for the Future process. | 2021-present |
| Community Block Leaders: In June 2020, AVEY created a Community Block Leader program to train parents during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide resource information to their neighbors. AVEY staff planned the program and developed materials. Weekly zoom meeting began with approximately 30 participants at each meeting. 90+ parents have become trained block leaders, with 30+ adding additional community health worker training. The parents have become an informal team, building a network of relationships across northeast Austin. | Create a team of parents who are local leaders at their schools and communities, and who have up-to-date information about COVID-related resources. | 90+ parents trained, with each reaching out to an average of 10 other families weekly. 30+ parents trained as community health workers with the possibility of state licensing. A network of leaders developed, along with a training process that is replicable. Expanded grassroots participant pool for future coalition work. | 2020-present |

I asked three respondents (#5, #6 and #7) who were most familiar with the coalitions over a long period of time to organize the types of coalitions into groups based on similarities and differences using a card sorting exercise. Figure 6 was cut up into separate pieces for sorting purposes. Two respondents were able to do the exercise in person and one virtually. Below are several examples of how respondents organized various types of coalitions. Numerical scores were given and averaged (left-1 point; middle-2 points; right-3 points) to arrive at overall placement in charts.

On the left are coalitions made up completely or mostly of people living in the affected communities (or groups located in those communities). In the middle are coalitions that have a mix of grassroots and institutional partners working together. On the right are coalitions that have little or no representation by individuals or groups living in the affected communities.



Respondents also noted that some of these coalitions were very large, with a high level of participation, regular meetings and open membership. Others consisted of small groups of people (5-15) and were by participating by invitation with a formalized membership.



Partners/Organizations: While the definition of the term “partner” may seem obvious, it was clear from interviews that respondents had different definitions of a partner, with three respondents not including community residents in their definition of partners. Perhaps this is tied to the idea that community members are recipients of services, rather than seen as decision makers or contributors to the process. (Hess, 1999; Warren & Mapp, 2011)

While all respondents named particular organizations and institutions as partners who work in the collaboratives being studied, other included terms were also used, including “action-oriented partners,” “money-focused partners,” and “thinky partners who write reports.” One respondent talked at length about the difference between “institutional partners” and “grassroots-oriented partners.” Institutional partners are defined as having greater capacity and infrastructure but are more constrained by the requirements placed upon them by funders. Grassroots-oriented

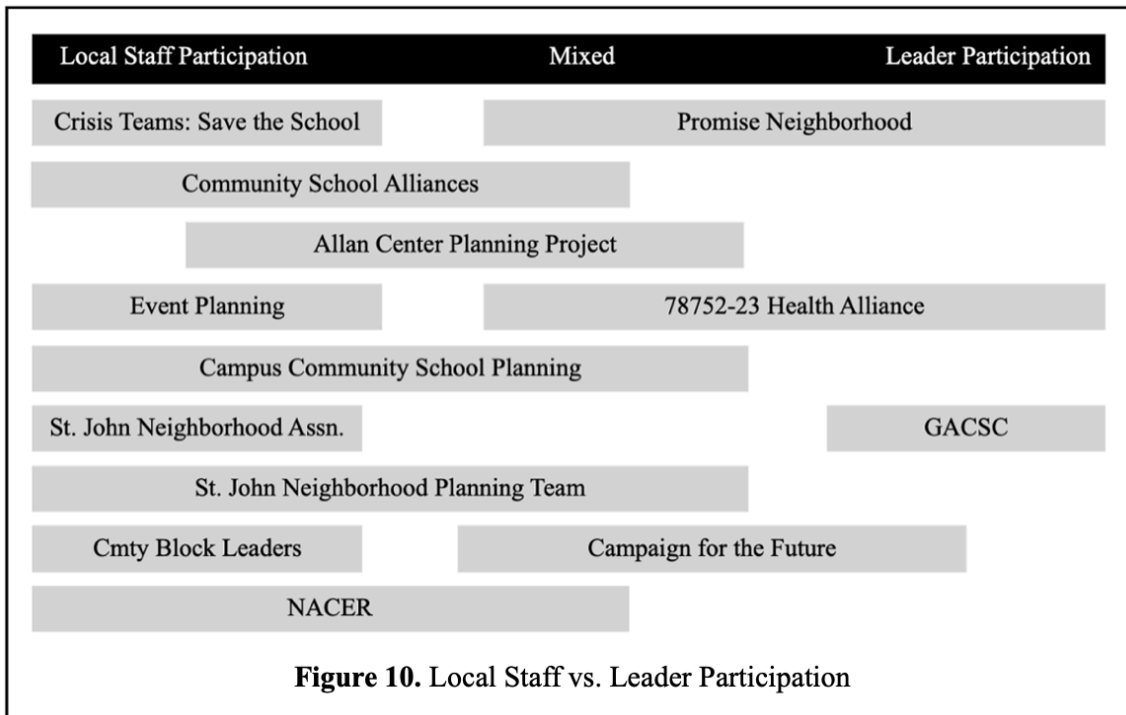
partners are able to “flow” and adapt to the needs of the community and are out “knocking doors” and building relationships.

Several respondents suggested other included terms for nonprofits, including “service providers,” which could be further categorized into “health providers,” “mental health providers,” and “social, emotional, mental and behavioral health-focused nonprofits.” Others added “STEM technology and skill building,” “academic-focused,” and the “elderly” as types. “Churches” and “faith-based” were mentioned as a type of non-profit who are “excellent at mobilizing volunteers.” “Higher ed groups,” “childcare centers” and nonprofits who are part of a network and are “branded,” such as Big Brother, Big Sisters and Boy Scouts. The division between “institutional” and “grassroots” nonprofits was evident in the way that several respondents categorized groups. One respondent described institutional nonprofits as “a different way of doing business, a different kind of culture . . . They’re more embedded . . . They have lunch with officials and work closely with superintendents and principals. They have a different structure funding-wise and culture in terms of how they do business.”

When asked about the role that government partners played, including city and county health and human service departments, parks and recreation, other municipal partners, and the school district, most respondents saw them as funders or policy makers, not as community-level partners. One respondent said, “I really think that what happens is that most of the daily life of those decision-makers, and they're all high-level decision-makers, most of their daily life is spent in their own silos. And they have to run that hierarchy, they have to be attentive to their own metrics, their own requirements, their own deliverables,” referring to city and county government, as well as large private health institutions.

Most respondents also saw government, school district and even large nonprofits more in terms of politics and power, rather than as active participants in education coalitions. “There is definitely politics. You think there’s education politics, there’s healthcare politics . . . It’s very territorial.” Government partners, school district and large nonprofits were seen as “focused” and even “threatened by funding issues,” while information sharing was seen as “low threat.”

A few respondents who were more involved in the St. John coalitions on a regular basis saw these partners in quite different terms. Public libraries, recreation centers, public health clinics and police were all seen as “easy to work with” and partners who “have the same goals to help kids.” Perhaps this is a difference in the levels of partners that are members of the various coalitions. The following illustration (based on a card sorting exercise) shows how coalitions differed as far as leader participation (such as agency directors, school district senior administrators and large nonprofit directors) versus local staff (such as library branch managers, health clinic directors, recreation center managers and community police officers).



Creating a taxonomy for what are considered “partners” in an education coalition may depend on the strategic “logic model” the coalition is using. For example, the Greater Austin Community School Coalition created a logic model that listed six “strategic practices” and six “strategic programs” that community schools in Austin would use to achieve the overall outcome, that all students are prepare for college, career and life. It should be noted that other community school efforts nationally construct different taxonomies, some with “four pillars” or “five elements.” According to one respondent involved in creating the GACSC logic model, the six “strategic programs” reflect a long history of strength and coalition-building in certain areas. Early childhood, health, extended learning and workforce development all have active coalitions with their own strategic plans and membership. “Student-centered learning” was a term and idea being promoted by the local teacher union at the time of the writing of the logic model and is reflected more in language and less in practice in the school districts. “Family

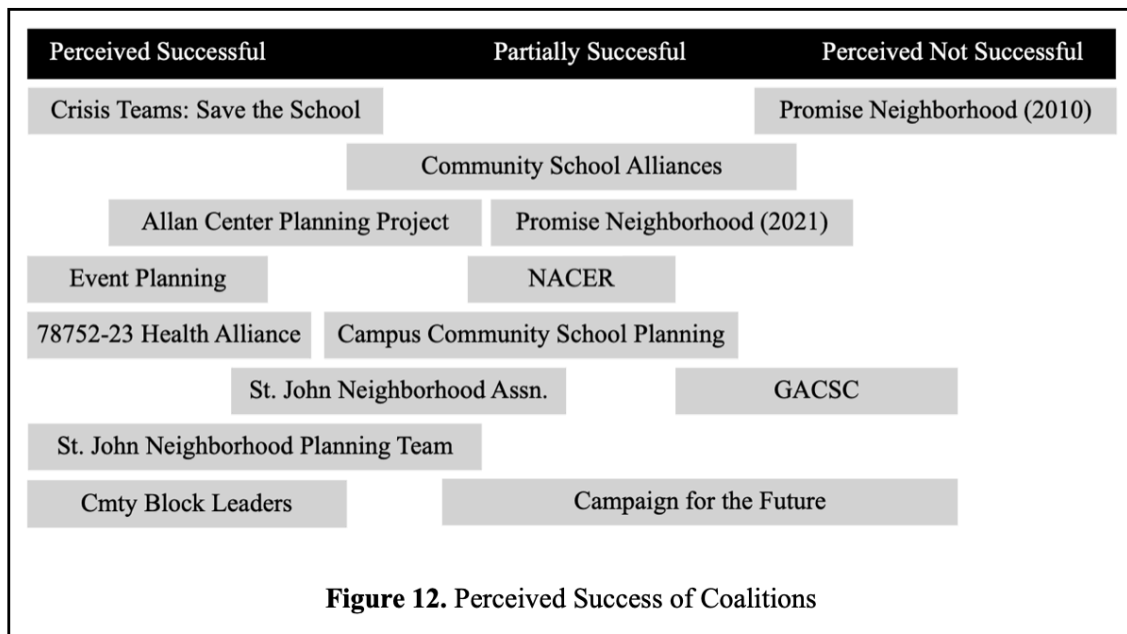
stability” as a focus is unique to Austin’s community school efforts and development of Family Resource Centers, starting in St. John at Webb Middle School. In other national efforts, this might have been termed “wraparound supports.”

| EARLY CHILDHOOD | HEALTH | FAMILY STABILITY |
|---|---|---|
| United Way for Greater Austin Any Baby Can Austin ISD Early Childhood ASPIRE AVANCE Child Inc. (Headstart) CommunitySync Easter Seals Head Start Healthy Families SAFE Alliance Success by 6 Thinkery YMCA ELR | Ascension Seton Austin ISD Health Services Austin Public Health Austin Travis County Integral Care Central Health Child and Youth Mental Health Partnership CommUnity Care Dell Children’s Health Express Dell Medical School It’s Time Texas Marathon Kids Michael & Susan Dell Foundation People’s Community Clinic Project Access Samaritan Center St. David’s Foundation Travis County Medical Society UT Community Collaborative | Asian American Resource Center Austin Energy Austin Voices for Education and Youth Family Resource Centers Austin Tenants Council BASTA City of Austin/Austin Public Health ECHO (Ending Community Homeless Coalition) Foundation Communities Housing Authority City of Austin Housing Works Travis County Health and Human Services |
| WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT | STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING | EXTENDED LEARNING |
| American Youthworks Austin Community College Austin Urban League Capital IDEA Community Advancement Network Goodwill of Central Texas SkillPoint Alliance University of Texas Entrepreneurship and Innovation Workforce Solutions | Austin ISD Austin Voices for Education and Youth Breakthrough Communities in Schools Del Valle ISD Education Austin Manor ISD Ready by 21 | Andy Roddick Foundation Austin ISD 21st Century and PrimeTime Programs City of Austin Parks and Recreation Boys and Girls Club of Central Texas Campfire Creative Action 4-H Learn All The Time |

Figure 11. GACSC Taxonomy of Partners

Finally, partners were asked, “What would a successful community school coalition look like?” Respondents whose experience was primarily with citywide coalitions or coalitions dominated by institutional partners struggled to define success. They used generalities such as “advancing the educational pipeline” or “having all students have access to the resources and supported they need to perform academically,

in their job, and to thrive.” One respondent was insightful in saying, “The more narrow the organizing principle, the better. Or the more likelihood for success and sustainability in the long term.” Perhaps this explains the difference in the illustration below, where respondents were asked to rank coalitions as more or less successful in achieving their goals.

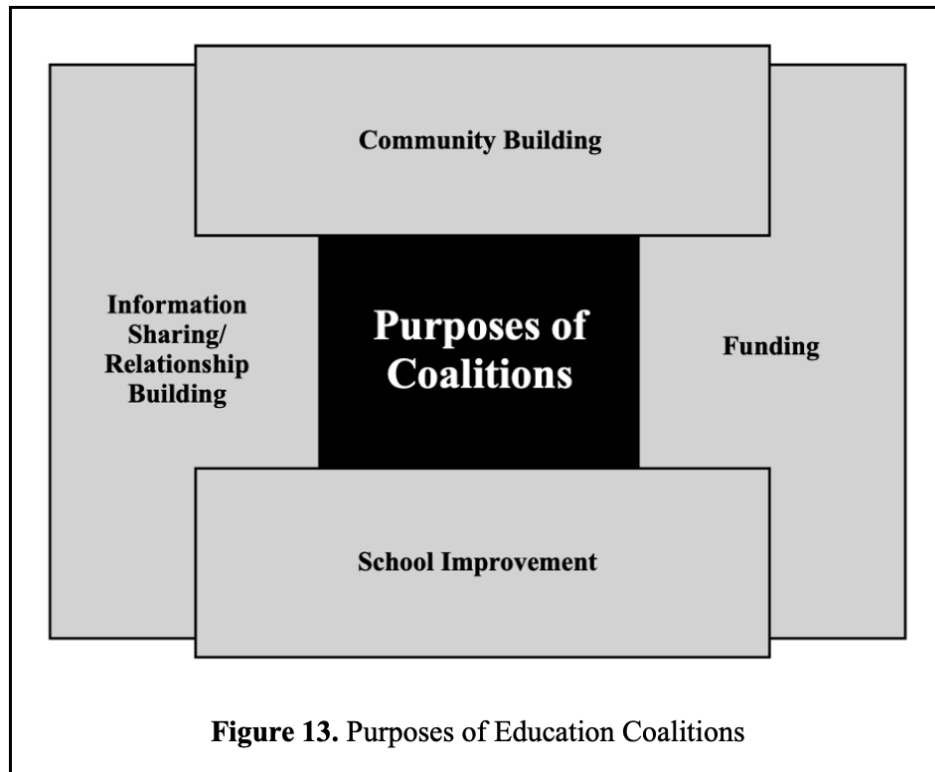


An example of a narrow focus for a coalition would be event planning. The HopeFest event planning team, which would include as many as 20 partner organizations to organize an annual resource fair for 3,000 people, had a narrow purpose and narrow measure of success, which was successfully planning and implementing a large annual resource fair. Given that the event has now been held 17 years in a row with 175 exhibitors and 3,000 to 4,000 attendees, the planning committee feels successful. The crisis teams have kept three schools from closing. The Allan Center Planning project successfully repurposed an empty school building into an early childhood and workforce development center. On the other hand, the Promise Neighborhood planning team (2010),

which tried twice to obtain federal planning grants, was not funded, and participants judge it as unsuccessful in its mission, even if it did build new partner relationships.

The Greater Austin Community School Coalition, which is currently on hiatus, is judged only slightly successful, perhaps because having a broad organizing principle, which was to support and expand community schools throughout central Texas. As one respondent said, “We tried to do three kinds of coalitions-be informational, have some trainings on community schools, expand community schools . . . You don’t want to say no to people, but you’re trying to do three kinds of problem solving.” Even though the GACSC made progress in holding community forums, creating a logic model and building a leadership team, it is considered only marginally successful by respondents who were involved.

Having a narrow focus is one factor in whether a coalition is judged successful. Respondents talked about the purpose of each coalition, which also affects how success is perceived. The illustration below shows the four purposes mentioned most often by respondents:



To some degree, all of the coalitions have multiple purposes. For example, an event planning team is sharing information, building relationships, building community and raising funds, and even contributing towards school improvement. The same can be said of Community School Alliance coalitions, which is focused on information sharing and relationship building, but can be involved in the other three areas as well.

Expectations, however, are different for these coalitions than they are for a team focused solely on funding (Promise Neighborhood) or on school improvement (GACSC). As one respondent said about Community School Alliance meetings, “(it’s) really beneficial to go to those kinds of meetings and learn from the other partners and then be able to gain opportunities that are available by having those kinds of relationships.”

Community: Another cover term that respondents used often was “community.”

While the meaning might seem obvious to most, it is worth exploring the various shades

of meaning and associations that respondents gave to this term. Analyzing the interviews, I found four distinct uses of the term “community.”

1. Community as a geographically bounded place. Respondents mentioned “the St. John community” or “the Rundberg community,” and talked about looking at data “across a community in smaller geographies. One respondent said, “I also know my role. I’m a partner, I don’t live there. I don’t live in their community.”
2. Community as a particular group identity, such as the black community or the Hispanic community. One respondent talked about the “Austin community.” Several respondents repeatedly used “grassroots community.” All of these group identities come clear with the question, “Who is Not a part of this particular group?” When asked who is outside of the group “grassroots community,” respondents answered that organizations and institutions are not part of this group, as well as the school district and local governments. It also seemed that this term referred more to minority communities rather than predominantly white communities. Several respondents mentioned that including “grassroots community” and “grassroots leadership” in your coalition is important.
3. Community as the Other. In philosophy and cultural discourse, the Other is that which is not the norm (Cahoone, 2003). The Other is usually defined and described by those in power, and can be used, sometimes unwittingly, as a tool to control (Said, 1978). Respondents used language such as “going into the community” and “the community needs to understand x.” One respondent talking from the vantage point of the school district talked about the “pressure from the community for transparency” as a problem, limiting the school district’s ability to function efficiently. At best, this

language can be paternalistic and demeaning; at worst, it can exclude people from decision-making and having agency.

4. Community as something that is constructed or built. Several respondents talked about the importance of the Community School Alliances and community events for “building community.” One said, “I’ve been to HopeFest every year and it is amazing how it brings community together.” Another respondent talked about having to “create my own educational community, away from my neighborhood” when bussed from a low-income neighborhood to attend a higher-income school. The term “interest community” was used for a constructed community of stakeholders who might not all live in a school’s feeder pattern but who have invested themselves in a school. They said, “I don’t build community based on student enrollment . . . You have so many people that care, and that want to become part of the community that you’re creating.”

In addition to these uses of the term “community,” there is also the term “community school.” The Coalition for Community Schools defines the term 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 lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities (2020).

This begs the question that if there are community schools, then there must be schools that are not community schools. What would those schools look like? When respondents were asked this question, they talked about schools that are “top-down” and “not

welcoming to community,” as well as schools that are focused on “drill and kill testing” rather than “providing a holistic continuum of supports to help youth and families towards self-sufficiency.”

It is clear that participants in the education coalitions being studied bring multiple and overlapping ideas of what the term “community” means, and that the term can be used in both positive and negative ways. The boundaries of community are also hard to define, with people belonging to multiple communities (geographic, cultural, affinity, religious, political) that have more or less meaning for them.

Education: The final cover term is education. This term and related terms (such as schools, campus, school district and academics) are used 430 times in the interviews. The term “education” was used in a variety of ways, including “get an education,” “need to be educated,” “education system,” “schools are programmed to do education,” “education outcomes,” “educate the parents,” “helping students care about their education,” “educational entities,” “educational systems,” “our mission is education,” “educate kids and graduate kids,” “being in education,” “educational equity,” “education data,” “education sphere,” “understand education,” “educators,” “educationally adept,” “educational collaboration,” “educational setting,” “education folks,” “education politics,” “educational institution,” “cultural norms of education,” “educational community,” “education starts at home,” “experience with education.”

Using a card sorting exercise was a first step in making sense of how these terms and their relationships can be understood. Respondents sorted the cover term “education” into the following categories, with some of the terms landing in more than one category:

- Education is a thing you can get or that can be delivered
- Education is an entity with culture and systems
- Education is something you do to people
- Education is a set of broader cultural values

Table 3. Uses of the Cover Term “Education”

| Education is a thing you can get or that can be delivered | Education is an entity with culture and systems | Education is something you do to people | Education is a set of broader cultural values |
|---|---|---|---|
| get an education | education system | need to be educated | helping students care about their education |
| education outcomes | educational entities | schools are programmed to do education | our mission is education |
| education data | educational systems | educate the parents | educate kids and graduate kids |
| educationally adept | being in education | helping students care about their education | educational equity |
| educational setting | educational equity | educate kids and graduate kids | education sphere |
| educational institution | education data | educators | education politics |
| education starts at home | education sphere | educationally adept | cultural norms of education |
| | understand education | educational setting | educational community |
| | educators | educational institution | education starts at home |
| | educational collaboration | experience with education | |
| | educational setting | | |
| | education folks | | |
| | education politics | | |
| | educational institution | | |
| | cultural norms of education | | |
| | educational community | | |

A further step in understanding these categories is applying Spradley’s nine dimensions for descriptive questions: Place/Space (where does education occur?);

Objects (what things are used in education?); actions (what actions are done in education?); activities (what activities occur in education?); events (what events occur in education?); time (when does education occur?); actor (who does education?); goal (what are goals for education?); and feeling (what feelings occur in education?). While a deeper exploration of these dimensions would be useful in further studies, some information was present in interviews.

1. Where does education occur? “Education begins in the home.” “Of course, the classroom is key, but also in other spaces out in the community.” “Children learn from the peers, parents, and mentors as well as their teachers.”

2. What things are used in education? “Books, technology, things children can manipulate.” “Resources are vital and teachers don’t have what they need to teach.”

3. What actions are done in education? “Teachers deliver curriculum and manage classrooms.” “Children are kept safe.” “Teachers spend lots of time doing administrivia instead of focusing on what’s important.”

4. What activities occur in education? “I just remember lots of quizzes and tests, homework, busywork. Should be more projects and imagination.” “Schools are incredibly busy places and you have to catch people when they are on the move.” “Teachers and administrators wear so many hats, they are overwhelmed.”

5. What events occur in education? “There are milestones like graduation, prom, etc.” “Schools are programmed to do education with a very busy day every day.” “Our lives revolve around the school calendar.”

6. When does education occur? “Schools are very time driven. Like moving mice through a maze.” “Real learning can happen anywhere, anytime. I think after school

doesn't get enough support." "Is test-prepping the same as learning? That's what so much time is spent on during the day."

7. Who does education? "Great question. While teachers are important, parents are just as important. They get left out." "Too many cooks at the district distracting teachers from teaching!" "It takes a village. Everyone in the community plays a part in educating children."

8. What are goals for education? "graduate kids." "college readiness." "district is focused on academics from a quantitative, not qualitative point of view. It's all about the numbers."

9. What feelings occur in education? "The front office may bring back memories of being in trouble for parents." "There's a lot of fear and pressure in education." "Lack of trust towards the district."

Reflection #1

It has been my intention for many years to use ethnographic analysis tools to more deeply understand the complex work of community-based school improvement, which has included thousands of hours of coalition work. Since beginning crisis-level school turnaround work with Webb Middle School in 2007, we have seen the power of using broad, open-ended questions to gather vital data from stakeholders. I have said to my team many times that the qualitative data we gather from small groups (also called house meetings) are the bricks from which we build our sustainable school improvement strategies.

Just by doing seven interviews with key participants in coalition work and doing qualitative analysis, including taxonomic analysis involving descriptive questions, has

brought to the surface insights and questions for further study. Before continuing with componential and thematic analysis, I want to list some of these insights and questions.

1. These coalitions all are necessary because something at the school district or city level is not functioning well. Many of the coalitions have been established to deal with a crisis, such as impending school closure, or to prevent a future crisis, such as creating school improvement plans that will help schools meet state accountability standards. Some have dealt with a particular neighborhood or campus issue, such as the work done by the 78752/23 Health Network in addressing chronic asthma in children or organizing events such as HopeFest to address safety issues and cultural division in the local community. Some of the coalition work has addressed a failure in existing city or school district systems. The St. John Neighborhood Association was reorganized to deal with issues such as sanitation and code enforcement that were being ignored by the city. The St. John Community School Alliance partners organized AISD's first Family Resource Centers because of the lack of systemic support at the district level for highly mobile families, including those who were homeless. In each situation, a problem at the city or school district level was causing harm to local schools and residents. The coalitions were organized to fill the gap, and in many cases to improve systems and resourcing at the city or school district level.

2. City, county and school districts prefer to build systems that work across multiple neighborhoods and schools. This can be effective, where, for example, a structured mentoring program with good systems in place is available to dozens of campuses. The city can offer rent assistance through its social service neighborhood centers. Where the citywide approach is less effective is in dealing with the different

situations and challenges found in various neighborhoods. For example, a neighborhood like St. Johns, with dozens of evictions a month, can overwhelm a bulk trash system that only has the capacity to do neighborhood pick-ups twice per year in each neighborhood. School district strategies for emerging bilinguals or special education students can be ineffective at campuses where numbers of students needing supports far outweigh district capacity, including recruiting enough teachers certified to teach emerging bilinguals or budgeting for administrative staffing at campuses to deal with special education reporting requirements.

3. The respondents described a tension between communities and the school district. School district efforts to intervene at struggling campuses is often draconian (closure), top-down with little input from the affected community, or ineffective, as shown by school turnaround research over the past decade (Meyers, 2019). With systems reform necessary at both the school district and city level to sustain improvements, local coalitions have to work at both levels to build sustainable improvements. This work can be hampered by cultural, political and personal differences and misunderstandings. At the heart of these conflicts is the passion felt by local stakeholders for their community. This passion is a strength in that it drives coalition participants to work deeply and tirelessly on community and campus change. But it also drives conflict with leaders who see one particular school as expendable or one neighborhood only in terms of political calculus and power.

It is notable that less tension was evident when discussing city and county leaders and systems. While not perfect, city and county elected officials seem more responsive to community issues and more able to enact change than school board trustees, who are less

powerful and have less control over school district actions. School administrators, including superintendents, have much more power than a mayor or even a city manager to make decisions affecting local communities. Only the most egregious actions rise to the level of something the school board will stop. Administrators can choose to take advice or not from school board members.

4. Education coalitions working on local campus and community issues and specific crises are more successful in achieving their goals than coalitions working across geographies and trying to change larger systems. The Greater Austin Community School Coalition, NACER, Promise Neighborhood and the Campaign for the Future are all ambitious efforts to move from localized success to citywide change. But they also have to expend energy on challenging deeply entrenched practices, organizations (including citywide nonprofits) and personnel who support the status quo.

5. Fuzzy use of words like “education,” “community,” and “partner” limit the effectiveness of school improvement. Players are talking past one another, talking about “engaging the community” without any clear understanding of what that means. More clear definitions of what is being discussed, whether it is education as a product or education as a system with specific rules and norms, can help coalitions be more strategic.

6. This work is virtually impossible without an intermediary. School districts ultimately are invested in maintaining the status quo and are not built to be responsive to crisis in any meaningful way. Communities can produce short-term gains but will not be able to sustain improvements without systems reform and resources from the city and school district. Austin Voices has acted as an intermediary over the past 15 years,

providing the infrastructure and leadership that have sustained efforts. Respondents were also clear that relationship-building with school district, city and county were vital to successful change, which is something only a consistently present intermediary can provide.

7. My main research question still makes sense. Cultural understanding, or the lack of it, is a key factor in the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships that support community schools. The interviews, however, have shown me that it is even more difficult than I thought for participants to understand their own culture, whether it be organizational, educational or cultural. It is like asking a fish to describe what it's like to be in water. It's their normal. Respondents were able, to some degree, to answer contrast questions, such as, "How does health culture differ from school district culture?" Most of the answers were focused on differing missions and not practices or structures. This reaffirms to me the value of having an intermediary who is adept at understanding and navigating multiple cultures. It also demonstrates to me the importance of gradually building understanding among coalition participants of cultural differences and how they can help or hinder success.

Componential Analysis

The next step in Spradley's ethnographic method is componential analysis. Componential analysis, to some degree, has already been done during the process of examining domains and building taxonomies. It is looking for contrasts and differences that reveal "... units of meaning that people have assigned to their cultural categories" (Spradley, 1980). For example, we could ask respondents the differences between a

campus and the school district headquarters. They might say, “Students and teachers are at a campus, while administrators and staff workers are at headquarters.”

Grassroots vs. Institutional Nonprofits: Several respondents contrasted nonprofits that had deep connections into local communities with those who provided services or who worked across multiple geographies but were less connected to particular communities. One respondent made the distinction between “grassroots and more institutional nonprofits.”

The chart below captures differences respondents listed between grassroots and institutional nonprofits:

Table 4. Non-Categorized Componential Analysis of Grassroots vs. Institutional Nonprofits

| Grassroots Nonprofit | Institutional Nonprofit |
|--|---|
| Dependent on cash flow to pay staff | More resources to absorb slow payment |
| Dependent on private donors, small grants and contracts. | More able to get large grants, contracts and foundation funding. |
| Building infrastructure as they are able. | Infrastructure (financial, programmatic, reporting, fundraising, communication) in place. |
| Led by a founder, activist, charismatic. Connection by community to a particular leader. | More formal culture. Board led, recruited from bureaucracies they are working with. ED is hired by board. |
| Focus and energy may come and go based on the capacity of leadership and staff | Focus and energy is consistent, based on strategic planning and fundraising |
| More established organizations may be threatened by grassroots nonprofit | Part of the establishment that is in power. |
| Focused on strengthening a community and solving problems. | Focused on creating programs that are funded through grants and contracts. |
| Deal directly with people in the community. | May deal with people at arms length through surveys and intermediaries. |
| Call the alarm when there is a policy or funding decision that affects their constituents. | Focused on many communities and long-term policies Slow to get involved in local conflict. |
| Walking with and identifying with people as partners in their work. | Providing services for clients. |
| Informally structured with staff focused on immediate mission | Formally structured with hierarchies and staff moving up the ladder. |
| Staff doing multiple and shifting roles. | Established roles and hierarchies for staff |
| Communication by word-of-mouth, community conversations, social media | Communication by websites, press releases, reports, social media. |

We can see certain commonalities between these dimensions of contrast. Some deal with funding, some with leadership, community, communication. Below is a chart grouping these dimensions:

Table 5. Categorized Componential Analysis of Grassroots vs. Institutional Nonprofits

| Category | Grassroots Nonprofit | Institutional Nonprofit |
|------------|--|---|
| Capacity | Building infrastructure as they are able. | Infrastructure (financial, programmatic, reporting, fundraising, communication) in place. |
| Capacity | Informally structured with staff focused on immediate mission | Formally structured with hierarchies and staff moving up the ladder. |
| Capacity | Staff doing multiple and shifting roles. | Established roles and hierarchies for staff |
| Community | Deal directly with people in the community. | May deal with people at arms length through surveys and intermediaries. |
| Community | Walking with and identifying with people as partners in their work. | Providing services for clients. |
| Community | Communication by word-of-mouth, community conversations, social media | Communication by websites, press releases, reports, social media. |
| Funding | Dependent on cash flow to pay staff | More resources to absorb slow payment |
| Funding | Dependent on private donors, small grants and contracts. | More able to get large grants, contracts and foundation funding. |
| Leadership | Led by a founder, activist, charismatic. Connection by community to a particular leader. | More formal culture. Board led, recruited from bureaucracies they are working with. ED is hired by board. |
| Leadership | Focus and energy may come and go based on the capacity of leadership and staff | Focus and energy is consistent, based on strategic planning and fundraising |
| Mission | Focused on strengthening a community and solving problems. | Focused on creating programs that are funded through grants and contracts. |
| Mission | Call the alarm when there is a policy or funding decision that affects their constituents. | Focused on many communities and long-term policy change. Slow to get involved in local conflict. |
| Power | More established organizations may feel threatened by grassroots nonprofit | Part of the establishment that is in power. |

Local vs. Citywide Coalitions: Most education coalitions in this study are focused on particular communities, with a few of the coalitions working at a larger scale and even citywide. We've already looked at several ways these coalitions differ, comparing grassroots vs. institutional partnerships, small vs. large participation, local staff vs. leadership participation and perceived success at meeting coalition goals. Componential analysis combines these comparisons with additional differences that respondents mentioned in their interviews, shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Categorized Componential Analysis: Local vs. Multi-Community/Citywide Coalitions

| Category | Local Coalitions | Multi-Community/Citywide Coalitions |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Examples | Crisis Teams: Save Webb, Stand Up for Reagan Community School Alliances Event Planning (HopeFest, Unity Walk) Allan Center Planning Project St. John Neighborhood Association | Promise Neighborhood (2010) Promise Neighborhood (2021) NACER Greater Austin Community School Coalition Campaign for the Future |
| Leadership | Elected or chosen from local community/campuses | Chosen by committee with rotating leadership |
| Leadership | Facilitation by Austin Voices | Facilitation by consultants |
| Meetings | Event planning, information sharing, relationship building, community school campus planning | Strategic planning, funding |
| Meetings | In the affected community | Virtual/central location |
| Membership | Membership is mainly people living in the affected area (combined with service providers/campus staff working locally) | Membership is mainly elected officials, school district administrators, school board members, senior level nonprofit leaders, business leaders, with limited grassroots representation |
| Membership | Open membership, with large number of participants (15 to 150) | Selective or closed membership, with 5-15 participants |
| Membership | Nonprofits, city & county agencies represented by local staff | Nonprofits, city & county agencies representation by citywide leaders |
| Mission | Focused on one campus, community or event. | Focused on feeder pattern or multiple communities. |
| Mission | Limited scope, focused on events, local strategies. | Broad scope, focused on systems, resources and large-scale change |
| Mission | Perceived as successful by participants | Perceived as mildly successful, in process or unsuccessful by participants |

Thematic Analysis

The final step in Spradley's ethnographic method is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis looks for generalized beliefs that are true across multiple respondents. Spradley defines a cultural theme as ". . . any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (1998, p. 141) For example, the idea that "changing the status quo is difficult" is a belief that was expressed in all of the interviews.

What follows is a thematic organization of ideas that were expressed multiple times by respondents.

We Need to Find Common Ground: Respondents referred to "finding common ground" or "looking for a win-win" as a goal of education collaborations. This included collaboration across sectors, collaboration with the school district and collaboration with community members. Implicit in this goal is the idea that there are cultural and political disconnects or even conflicting goals that have prevented successful collaboration to occur.

Table 7. Finding Common Ground (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | And so once I shift the conversation away from healthcare, and start asking them about what their goals are, as a superintendent, as a board, their mission is to educate children. I'm able to then find a common ground with them. |
| #1 (Health/Business) | The school district has a population that is at great risk. We've got preventative and supportive services here that will help benefit us and increase the level of wellness of the population. Let's marry this together. Let's work harder, smarter together. We both win. And so you're decreasing your risk population in education. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | And what you find is that, by touching these kids, it makes a big difference for them (the school), too. So basically, everybody wins. It's a great collaboration and partnership. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | I think the way of doing that, and doing that successfully, is really being able to listen carefully to what each of those partners is bringing to the table and to understand their own context that they're bringing to the table. And then to find points of alignment , especially with regard to vision |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | It's like looking through different lenses at the same thing. You need different perspectives looking at the strengths and the challenges to find what can make things better. If everyone can agree on improving conditions, reducing barriers and expanding opportunities, then partners can bring their own perspectives and can align and coordinate. A win for school, partners, kids, families. |

Community Schools Are a Holistic Approach: Respondents consistently praised the “holistic approach” of community schools, combining academics with community-based supports. Respondents also used the language “whole child” to describe this approach.

Table 8. Community Schools Are a Holistic Approach (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|----------------------------------|---|
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | I'm just on board with the community school model. I honestly think it takes a village and this is one really important way to make those connections and support our kids. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Community schools delves into helping families more holistically , and not just focusing solely on the educational needs of children. I think it is very important for community schools to succeed in our community. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | My definition of healthcare is very broad, which becomes a challenge for health providers. So if I'm talking about housing, that's under my healthcare umbrella, because that's about family stability, behavioral health, and all of those kinds of things that impact kids as well. And so I'm using a very broad definition of health. I think where health providers have a challenge in talking to educational folks is a tendency to focus on things like immunizations and other health needs. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | I think its about providing a holistic continuum of supports to help youth and families towards self-sufficiency. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | So those are the things that a community school really does well is. We try to improve attendance, try to improve grades. We try to improve the educational outcome. So I think some people just don't connect that at the school. I think they think social services when they think of community schools. And grades and attendance are two-way different things. And trying to convince people that you can't have one without the other in some cases. That you have to take care of the whole child if they're gong to succeed, it's difficult. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Holistic approach also means that you may need to work with the whole family to help the child. Could be parent issues, home issues that are causing problems. Need supports for students and families. All these different factors are in play. |

Community Schools Need Someone to Be a Bridge and a Translator Between

Groups: Respondents used phrases like “connecting the dots,” “being a catalyst,” “intermediary,” and “building bridges” to describe the necessity of having someone or some organization as the connector in an educational cross-sector partnership.

Table 9. Community Schools Need a Bridge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------|---|
| #4 (Nonprofit) | And that's part of what I mean by being a translator between systems as to repeatedly talk about one entity's context in relation to the other, and then pull it back to what is that higher value, that's the way you work through those challenges, when they when they happen. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | So my current role is being a catalyst who sits between all of those different types of stakeholders. You meet the corporations, the school systems, the districts, the nonprofits, whether it's health, education, workforce . . . bringing groups together in an intelligent way to work together to reach their goals collectively. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | So wherever I can assist to move cross-sector collaboratives forward and help them to actually succeed. I just try to grease the wheels in help those groups toward success as they would envision it in an ideal world. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | It takes someone whose role is an intermediary , and they have to have time dedicated to managing the relationships and helping those partners get what they need in order for them to continue to be effective, making sure partners understand what the schools need for everyone to be effective together. You have to have the person in the middle. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | It does take relationship building, and it does take time to coordinate and make a partnership successful. There has to be someone, like a champion , or somebody who is the coordinator between partners and the campuses and district. That person has to understand both worlds have the patience to convene, hold meetings and talk when things aren't quite working. Need for a partner coordinator, a bridge. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | But if we're gonna do educational collaboration, how do we take all these different pieces and make them work together? I think you have to have people who are bridges between us. That's part of the solution. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | I think about how to be the translator between a bank and a school, how to be the translator between a church group and that school, how to fill each other's needs. How to make them communicate with each other. But the second part is understanding both of their needs. So how do you translate both of them, so they understand, and they're both of their needs are being met? So that's my job, to translate and to connect and to understand everybody's needs. |

Table 9. Community Schools Need a Bridge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------|--|
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Family Resource Centers, community school coordinators, social workers serve as a bridge. Connecting a funder or service provider to school staff. Connecting a parent to services. Connecting strategic health services to schools to increase attendance. We serve like a facilitator and a backbone organization. We hold bridging events so agencies can have an easy way to connect with communities. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Schools exist to educate kids. A fortress school or a come if we call you school keeps the community out, including partners. Even if there is an open door, schools are really busy and are hard to connect with. A bridging organization can do the work of identifying and coordinating resource partners. At alliance meetings we do joint planning. |

Cross-sector Partnerships Are Necessary if We Are Going to Improve

Educational Outcomes: Respondents were clear that the problems facing education and society cannot be solved by working in silos. It “it takes a village” with partners meeting together with one another and the schools they serve, understanding both community and campus needs.

Table 10. Cross-Sector Partnerships Are Necessary (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | Systems can function more efficiently and effectively through partnerships. It takes a village , it truly does, and not one individual, not one system can do it alone, nor should they. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | I think when we talk about cross-sector partnerships , the theory behind it, and I think that the logic model, the theory of change is really important. You know, in this case, it's all these interrelated pieces that affect a child's success. And that by definition makes it really different difficult to peel one piece off, and say this has the most impact and this has the least. I think with the district, they're inheriting a certain 25-30 year old paradigm. It's a very political paradigm of measuring success. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | The Community School Alliance meetings are great because you can learn from what other organizations are doing, you can see opportunities where you can collaborate with them, and you can also see avenues where, if you hear things, you know where to send a parent or suggest to a counselor so they can reach out to the students. It's really beneficial to go to those kinds of meetings and learn from the other partners and then be able to gain opportunities that are available by having those kind of relationships. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | How do we work together to address those issues that aren't owned by any one entity? |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | In a community school model, the school is at the center People come together because to work at a school is very much working in the community. So when you have partners coming in, we're literally addressing not just the needs of that of the community, but we're addressing within the school. But without the meetings, without coming together as a partnership, partners can't know how to help the education goals and the school won't have connections to partners and the community. It's a win-win. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Together we can do more. It takes a village to educate a child. The 40 developmental assets by Search Institute talk about the range of things a child needs to be successful in life. Way past the classroom. The school district can't do it by itself. The more a school district takes things in house and isolates, the weaker it becomes. In school work, there are no super people. Community schools are strong because of the diversity, the broad support. Won't fall apart like it would if one entity is trying to do it all. Need partnerships. |

Cultural Differences Are a Challenge for Cross-Sector Collaborations: Each sector has its own way of doing things, its own culture. This makes it difficult for partners to work with each other, including with the schools and school district. Respondents agreed that each sector had its own culture, and that campus culture and school district culture were especially difficult to navigate with an intermediary person or organization. Respondents also noted that there were variations in culture across campuses and organizations.

Table 11. Cultural Differences Are a Challenge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | And it goes back the community school model, where you're bringing folks close and you're breaking that cycle of, "We're just gonna do the thing that we've always done because that's what we've always done." And you're challenging those cultural norms of education and even challenging the cultural norms of partners. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | I think the best part about nonprofit culture is that most most nonprofits, have a mission to support a cause, make a difference, help others. It's not as competitive, you don't have a culture where you feel like people are going to be stabbing each other in the back to move ahead, instead, everybody just wants to support each other, because they're all just motivated by this one common goal. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | So there are some schools that really appreciate the nonprofits and are you know, want to work hand in hand with them and respect the people that come in and support their students on campus. And there are some that are very more hesitant, because they, their assumption is there's some kind of agenda and they want to protect their kids and protect their staff. And then there's some campuses that just have a culture where it's we just are going to do everything, the staff is going to do everything. And we don't want any outside support. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | My nonprofit has its own culture. It does some research, does some assessment, and then that goes into a planning team that takes the research and tries to develop a plan for addressing it. And the piece we never get to is the implementation piece. |

Table 11. Cultural Differences Are a Challenge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|----------------------------|---|
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Different organizational cultures, when they attack a problem, are going have set ways of working. There's like three or four or five things the school district is going to do every time. They're going to form some sort of working group. They're going to issue an interim report, and then another interim report. And maybe if it keeps going, a year later the report will come out. They're going to find a couple of really quick little things to do. The city is similar, but also different. And then a grassroots group will say, "Well, we will enact change, we're going to have a press conference, have a march, and do House meetings, and we're going to get somebody elected. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | I work at trying to help health systems and education systems understand one another at that point in time. I think one of the distinctions is a distinction in hierarchy within the two of them, and how that hierarchy plays out in pragmatic ways. But even within health culture , it's important to distinguish between the hierarchy in a hospital system versus public health culture versus clinical care culture, because they're all different. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | Education culture. At its best, there's a lot of vision. At its worst, it becomes like the brainstem, focused on the basic function, which is compliance. The more pressure a school district is under, the more it is struggling to meet those basic compliance expectations, the more it narrows down, the vision narrows down. Other things are not valued. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | It's when we've got systems, whether they're health or education or other, that start failing because of issues of logistics without understanding the higher value of what you're trying to achieve. This is where things break down between sectors, as well as the understanding of decision-making. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | Institutionally-based nonprofits have their own culture. It's a different way of doing business, different kind of culture. They have lunch with officials, have a different funding and business culture. Can be a tension with community when they have to get data and hit certain benchmarks. Grassroots nonprofits have their own culture. Churches have their own culture. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | School culture has a language. Lots of acronyms and insider talk. If somebody walks into a school and to a meeting and starts listening, you wouldn't understand the actual language, you have an AP, you know, you have a PSS. So, right away, you're almost literally translating acronyms, you know, for these partners. |

Table 11. Cultural Differences Are a Challenge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------|--|
| #6 (Nonprofit) | One of the biggest barriers for partners is very much school culture. Everybody's really, really busy. I think school culture is very much programmed to get through the day. Everybody is working on school just to make it to 3:45. So when somebody walks in and says, "Hey, I want to give," or "I want to use your building," that doesn't fit a 3:45 situation. You're talking about a Sunday, you're talking about a Saturday, you're talking about, you know, donating. So it's not the norm. But that's why I believe in the community school model and the community school coordinator role. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | Actually, I think in school culture at these higher levels, not only do these needs get forgotten, like taking care of family needs or making sure a kid has clean clothes to wear to school, but they're criticized as a waste of time or not the role of the school. I've heard the TEA Commissioner be dismissive of these kinds of things as not a function of schools, which is stunning that he would say that. It is all the same for the kid. They don't separate into academic and family needs. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | School culture is not very good at relationships. It's not very good at explaining things and helping partners. You have to catch up with them. They (the school) aren't going to slow down for you. The district level is even harder. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | In the health sector, it's life and death. Cut and dry. Science. In social services and education, it's different. Sometimes cultures are in conflict with each other. Schools are about attendance, short-term testing, grades, milestones. Create a lot of pressure and activity. Health sector has different goals, timing, pressures. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Legal challenges, data sharing, HIPPA and FERPA. These can be cultural barriers. Willingness to take risk. Because schools are so repetitive, so scheduled, it's sometimes difficult to break out of patterns. Resistance to change. Teachers have a tough time getting out of their box. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Parents who have come from a rural part of Mexico to urban America can have cultural gaps. Schools have a hierarchy that you have to navigate. Important to build trust with school leaders. Small nonprofits can move much more quickly. Even more difficult if the district is involved, where it can be very bureaucratic. |

Funding Is a Challenge for Cross-Sector Collaborations: When coalitions are focused on funding (such as collaborating on a grant), a different set of participants may come to the table. Competition is created. Coalitions also work to steer school district, city and county resources towards their priorities. A coalition that is becoming more formalized can become a competitor with its own members for funding.

Table 12. Funding Is a Challenge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | The funding model is just incredibly broken in public education. Investing in partners can multiply the investment many times over. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | For nonprofits, there's always the need to raise money. You have to do things, sometimes, that may not be exactly what you want to do. But you don't have a choice because you've got to pull in the bucks, or you're going to close down. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | If you see education as a zero-sum game or a limited pie, then it's a really depressing thing to be in. The kids are there if you offer the things that families need and want. Enrollment will support funding growth. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Anytime there's money involved, people want to be positioned. We have a saying where that money goes, that's where people want to be. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | If a coalition is about information sharing, that's low threat. Budgets aren't threatened unless you hear about something you might get left out of or your funders might not like. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | Competition goes on within educational entities, within social service entities, as well as healthcare, so it's within any one of those within social services, those entities are most typically competing for local funds. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | Cash flow can be difficult for small, grassroots nonprofit. The large funders don't always pay on time. The institutional nonprofits can make it through. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | Partnerships are just kind of not on the school district's radar. It's just like, oh, yeah, partners. It's a second thought instead of a first thought. But partnerships are the quickest way to match need with resources. You have a partner right there that just by partnering, you could meet the same need or 80% of it. Think of partnerships first versus last. |

Table 12. Funding Is a Challenge (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------|---|
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Nonprofits and even the school district can be competitors for funding. School district can take programs away from partners. If we don't worry about who gets credit and when people are leveraging what they can bring to the table what can be done. Need respect and collaboration. Money sets up competition. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Funding can cause some groups to look down on others. Great organizations sometimes don't have the infrastructure and funding. Funding is complicated and can warp a group's mission. The trick is to sustain services beyond funding. |

Gaining Agreement on the Mission Is Key for Successful Cross-Sector

Collaborations: Respondents talked of “understanding each other’s goals,” “being aligned,” and “agreement on outcomes.” It is also clear that achieving those things, especially with district and citywide partners, can be challenging.

Table 13. Gaining Agreement on the Mission (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | You have to understand the goals of a school district. You have to be able to understand education exists to educate kids, to graduate kids. Mold your program around the goals of the school district. You have to be able to share like minded goals. |
| #1 (Health/Business) | We've got standardized tests and education. We've got health care screenings and health care to be able to assess that normative population. And when you have patients or students who are on the outliers of those, that's where school systems and health care, in my opinion, they begin to go off the rails a little bit. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | It's great if we are totally aligned with what the needs of kids are. But that's challenging. We get pressure from the chamber of commerce, who has one agenda, and from the new school district administration that has another agenda. Their goals are quantitative focused on test scores and not qualitative. But that's a problem because there aren't valid test scores for two years. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | What do you all do anyway? If you can't answer that question in the first three to five years of a coalition, it's gonna be really hard to sustain that particular kind of coalition. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Forming a citywide coalition can be tough. Who has what at stake? Who owns the work? Who is more directly involved in the work? There are folks who aren't directly involved in the work who want to have as much say in how we're going to approach community schools. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | I think the way of doing that, and doing that successfully, is really being able to listen carefully to what each of those partners is bringing to the table and to understand their own context that they're bringing to the table. And then to find points of alignment, especially with regard to vision. They can each be different from one another, but there's a shared attachment to a vision. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | The more people agree on the outcomes you're trying to achieve, the more likely you will be successful. We do action planning through teams that bring a lot of people around the table. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Community School planning brings as many people as possible into shared development of mission and strategies. It has been very successful. |

School District/Campus Culture and Systems Are Difficult for Partners to

Navigate: Respondents had a lot to say on this subject. The school district is ambivalent about partners. Some campuses are more welcoming than others. A change in leadership or staffing can set back community school coalition efforts by years. Respondents were clear that having an intermediary or a champion to help navigate school culture is helpful if not necessary for partners.

Table 14. School District/Campus Culture and Systems (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | It is not common to find community-based partners who understand how to partner with school systems. |
| #1 (Health/Business) | I would advise partners trying to work with the school district that they need a cheerleader , a person who is going to be their champion; they need to align with the goals of the district; and they need to collect information and tell their story through data. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | It amazes me that some people, even in the district, still don't know about Austin Partners in Education . We're the official portal for volunteers set up by the district! But we struggle sometimes trying to make sure that the district and campus staff are aware of what the process is. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | So there are some schools that really appreciate the nonprofits and are you know, want to work hand in hand with them and respect the people that come in and support their students on campus. And there are some that are very more hesitant, because they, their assumption is there's some kind of agenda and they want to protect their kids and protect their staff. And then there's some campuses that just have a culture where it's we just are going to do everything. The staff is going to do everything. And we don't want any outside support. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | When you're trying to build cross-sector partnerships and the power of partnerships, and then you can have a change in leadership in the school district. It can have such a strong effect on that work. Years and years of work can be altered by a bad choice. |

Table 14. School District/Campus Culture and Systems (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|------------------------------|--|
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | Trying to get a decision from the school district can be really slow and difficult because there's a certain number of approvals that you have to go through. So it's a very glacial process . . . it just makes it that much more difficult to work with them as a partner. And they're constantly just throwing Jell-O at the wall and seeing what sticks, so there's always something new that they're trying to accomplish. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | The current culture is one of "We're in charge and we don't need you, and you go away because we say so. This is our sandbox." And we've have had times with other superintendents, where there was understanding that collaboration and partnership really were worthwhile. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | Timing is always an issue. There is an ebb and flow to the school calendar. You can have a great idea, but if it is implemented at the wrong time, it will not do well. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | With the district, there's a lot of cooks in the kitchen which is hard for an outsider to get their heads around. So many people dealing with any one issue. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | School districts can view partnerships as kind of a fluffy area, as optional. They don't take partners as seriously as they should for their credentials and skill sets. And there's usually not a lot of effort to bridge the gap with providers who may not all get education culture. Partners are a second thought, not a first thought. But why would they not want to partner? It's a quick way of leveraging resources. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | School districts generally don't have a position at a campus or at the district who is the intermediary, who can manage partnerships and relationships, help those partners have what they need to be effective, make sure partners understand what schools need to be effective. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | And if the principal doesn't like you, you're not really going to do much. If you are in any way messing up a basic function like safety, your group will struggle, even if you've also worked through relationships to weave your way through all those hierarchies and overlapping departments. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Timing and schedules, who makes decisions, approvals, permission . . . understanding the code of schools can be very difficult for partners. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Districts are like a large corporation. Very hard to navigate. It takes time to build key relationships, and then there's turnover and you have to start again. |

A Place-Based Approach Is Key for Solving Issues of Equity: There was universal agreement that campuses and neighborhood are unique in their strengths and challenges, and that using a coordinated place-based approach to planning and services was more effective than using district-wide or citywide strategies. This is also the most equitable approach since it values the voices of those most impacted by the coalition work.

Table 15. Place-Based Approach (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|----------------------------|---|
| #1 (Health/Business) | So it's this wraparound care model where we're increasing access and closing gaps in health care for children in the spaces and places where they are , which is schools. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | We need to look where need is concentrated. Looking at areas that have high poverty, high unemployment, no access to health care. Under-resourced, but high-need neighborhoods, and we haven't gotten to the point where we look at things place-based. I'm a big advocate for going to where the need is highest; you can have a bigger impact. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Schools are a place where people have built trust relationships. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | Education, health data and social service data has really evolved into understanding issues of equity, social equity, and health care equity, educational equity by looking across geographies, seeing the data at the neighborhood level. Place based focus allows us to look at data across a community in smaller. That's where the sense of an equity focus comes is how you find clusters of children who are not doing well. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Need to make equity a verb. The people closest to the problems are most affected, have the ideas and will be the ones to make change. Community schools believes in bringing schools and neighborhoods together to do place-based problem solving. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Place-based approaches take skilled leadership and facilitation. We've done it a lot. School has tried to imitate and found it difficult because of their agenda and difficulty being a listener. Benefit in have a trusted party as facilitator. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Sometimes school districts, as a means of power, tells one neighborhood that they have to sacrifice their school or their needs for the greater good of the district. School districts, unless they are pushed or by into the place-based concept, are not motivated to support particular neighborhoods. |

Understanding Politics and Power Dynamics Is Key to the Success of Educational

Cross Sector Partnerships: Respondents were clear that politics affects the work of community school coalitions. Politics is external (state accountability and testing, district/city/county politics) and internal (funding competition among coalition members). Successful coalitions may produce fear in school district staff who are afraid to share power. Respondents reiterated the importance of building relationships and trust between coalition partners, community members and campus/school district staff.

Table 16. Politics and Power (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|---|
| #1 (Health/Business) | There is definitely politics. You think there's education politics, health care politics. It's very territorial. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | One new person, including leaders, can destroy years and years of work that has been built up. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | I think the district is working with a 25–30-year-old paradigm about how to educate kids. It's a very political paradigm. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | In collaborations, larger groups like nonprofits or city or county can have more say than smaller groups. You might be slow to criticize one of your funding partners or an elected official. Have to manage those dynamics. Have to find win-wins. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | The GACSC struggled to build infrastructure because of the “Who’s in charge” and “How do we decide?” kind of questions. Certain groups have stopped the work. Tough to agree on our goals, even though we did accomplish some things. Who is at the table? How do you arrive at consensus around key organizational questions? It’s an evolutionary process. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | Forming a citywide coalition can be tough. Who has what at stake? Who owns the work? Who is more directly involved in the work? There are folks who aren’t directly involved in the work who want to have as much say in how we’re going to approach community schools. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | I think the power dynamics, the fear, the threat . . . community schools had a lot of backing from the mayor but that elicited some fear among established partners. |

Table 16. Politics and Power (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------|---|
| #4 (Nonprofit) | I would say I have very little power and a whole lot of influence. And I have capitalized on that for most of my career. But if I've got influence, and if I can share information and get them to talk to one another. I think that's what keeps that group cohesive. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | In a grassroots nonprofit, a lot of the decision making and energy behind that group generally comes from a particular leader or set of leaders with a particular kind of personality that people gravitate to. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | If you have a problem, you have to follow the district's grievance policy, and it's crafted in a way that by the time you find out that you had to do that it's too late for the grievance. They're going to outlast you and have the advantage of lots of resources. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | As much as people say the words equity and diversity and inclusion, the people who use them the most and have them the most in their messaging are usually ones that are doing the worst at operationalizing it. It's just messaging until you really put resources and opportunity in people's hands. It's reflected in how you treat people. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | Equity is three things: how you treat people, a shifting in actual tangible resources and opportunity, and decision-making power. |
| #6 (Nonprofit) | Principals who are taking community school approaches aren't getting any gold stars downtown for it. Not at all. And it puts them in a difficult situation culturally and professionally. Because it's like treated like this stuff is something extra, but it's not. You know, the politics around it are hard for partners to understand. Why would schools not want to partner to help their kids and families? |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | A large nonprofit might work with a community, maybe through a large grant. It starts out collaborative but then the pressure to perform, to show data to the funder takes over. Power shifts from the community to the needs of the nonprofit. It's why communities are slow to trust when someone else is getting money. But the community needs a way for funds to flow. Takes capacity building and trust built over many years with an intermediary. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Power and politics is like the elephant in the room. It's felt but not talked about. Takes a lot of sensitivity as a facilitator or bridge organization to navigate. Also keep in mind history, why things are the way they are. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Relationships are important in community school collaborations. When a person or a leader leaves, those connections and trust can go with that person. If the new person doesn't want to share power, it can be difficult. |

Collaborations that Include Grassroots Partners in Meaningful Ways Are More

Likely to Be Successful in Achieving Their Goals: Respondents talked about “gaining small wins,” “building relationships and trust with communities,” and “doing this with community.”

Table 17. Including Grassroots Partners (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | Oftentimes, we as providers don’t want to get out of our comfort zones, but it’s about building relationship with communities and building trust . It’s building that collaboration and truly allowing people to feel that you are partners. |
| #4 (Nonprofit) | I think when you start working with the people at the neighborhood level, they know which kids have unstable housing, which kids are hungry and having a hard time paying attention, which kids are not attending school regularly. I think it really comes down to listening, with residents, with frontline service providers and school staff and classroom teachers. |
| #5 (Nonprofits) | Grassroots nonprofits and groups get out in the streets, go door-to-door, go to where people are. They build relationships and trust. Institutional nonprofit stay at arms length. Grassroots tend to be tenacious, sticking with people and walking them through, equipping them with agency. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | Sometimes projects are planned backwards. A nonprofit or some group goes and writes a grant, gets money for a community and then comes to them asking for their participation. Why wasn’t the community involved at the front end? Hurts trust, relationships, sustainability. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Easier to start small, gain successes and build from there. Scale up. We have taken a grassroots project and scaled it up. Harder when you’re with people who have not experienced the success. Also, build habits and traditions that are part of the community. Eventually, you get to the systems and that does take working at the citywide or district level. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | If you can’t be successful in the small, you won’t be successful in the large. If you can build a process that works and is repeatable, replicable, then you don’t have to recreate the wheel. You can also learn cultural lessons that apply elsewhere. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | People are more willing to be part of a project that was planned with them, that was their idea. Too many things are planned in some room downtown and done for or to community. Things are more successful when they are done with. |

Education Is Hampered by Fear of Change and the Desire to Keep the Status Quo

Quo: Respondents universally spoke of fear as being a barrier to Community Schools coalition work, with both fear of punishment and of upsetting the status quo as factors. It was also clear that Community Schools work challenges established institutions.

Table 18. Fear of Change (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | School systems are apprehensive to try anything new. They're afraid to let the people in the house, see them get messy. They don't want people to open up the closet or look under the rug. And it's the same thing in health care. You have incredible amount of pressure from payers from your community. |
| #1 (Health/Business) | Perfection is the enemy of the good in every area. People do need school systems, health care, nonprofits to have the acceptance and the grace to be messy. And so because we're fearful of upsetting people, we are going to keep the status quo the same. |
| #1 (Health/Business) | And it goes back the community school model, where you're bringing folks close and you're breaking that cycle of, "We're just gonna do the thing that we've always done because that's what we've always done." And you're challenging those cultural norms of education and even challenging the cultural norms of partners. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | But then the district will come up with something no input and no collaboration. There's turnover in the district and there's a lot of fear. If you get slapped once you don't want to get slapped again. There's a lot of fear to do anything. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | And I get pushback from my organization because we've never done something like that before in 30 years. |
| #5 (Nonprofits) | Everyone should have a sense of dignity; everyone deserves a quality of life. If Austin is truly one of the greatest cities in the country, in the world, it needs to be number one for everybody. Until it's that, it's just status quo. There's no real equity. |

| Table 18. Fear of Change (Thematic Analysis) | |
|---|---|
| Respondent | Statements |
| #5 (Nonprofits) | I found they value of promotion, getting as high as you can up the hierarchy so you can retire in a good place. There's the compliance culture, there's the skittish nature, where people are worried about getting in trouble. The fact is that we've got institutionalism. And if we're going to change education for the sake of kids, if we're going to change the system, that doesn't work well for lots of people, we've got to work with who's there, even if it's far from optimal. How are we going to bring the pieces together and collaborate? Part of the solution is having people who are bridges. |
| #5 (Nonprofits) | People get threatened for different reasons. Maybe they get threatened because it makes them feel insecure. It might threaten because it's unfamiliar. Whatever the reason, people sometimes get threatened by groups like ours. Lately, we're talking a lot about love. That's part of the answer for sure. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | School culture is predictable. Testing and accountability has scripted education and made it much harder to be creative. Pressures of testing in Title 1 schools can work against school improvement. Afraid to do anything different because the stakes are so high. |

Cross-sector Collaborations Must Help Systems Improve at the Local and the District/Citywide Level: Respondents all saw systems improvement as vital to building effective and efficient Community Schools. A systems approach was compared to doing heroic “one-off” efforts and being dependent on staff members who may come and go. Respondents were in agreement that the Community Schools coalition work had improved systems in the city and school district, but that these gains were at risk due to new district leadership.

Table 19. Systems Improvement (Thematic Analysis)

| Respondent | Statements |
|-------------------------------|--|
| #1 (Health/Business) | Systems can function more efficiently and effectively through partnerships. |
| #2 (Nonprofit/ Mentoring) | With a lot of energy, you can do one offs. You can do heroic efforts. But to sustain, you have to have systems like Austin Partners in Education. |
| #3 (Govt./Social Services) | To me, one purpose of Community Schools is to push people towards better systems. The school district kind of comes and goes and it depends who is there. Right now, a lot of systems are breaking down because of turnover. But Community Schools have helped build systems of support across much of the district. |
| #5 (Nonprofit) | For instance, we have to have systems in place to do all that, you know, all these things, take some people in the middle that are doing a lot spending a lot of time on things that aren't direct teaching and running a school and all of that. But who's the owner of this partnership relationship? And it's usually there's nobody there for that unless you have a community schools model with that coordinator. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | While you can start at the local level, eventually you have to make change at the city, county, state and even national level working on systems. Harder, but you're also impacting more people. |
| #7 (Nonprofit) | Systems are complex. Data, evaluation, processes, feedback loop for improvement. Systems change can mean lots and lots of meetings and resources. All of these things make up a system. A collaborative team working together can do great work on improving systems. But they need support. |

Reflection #2

As I finish this study, I am once again struck by the value of using good questioning techniques when working with people engaged in the difficult work of changing institutions and systems. It is easy to stay in a spin cycle of critique and despair if you are not continually sharpening your understanding through careful listening and analysis. Although I still think that a lack of cultural understanding among partners is

detrimental to the success of cross-sector partnerships, I am aware from these interviews that we have had an extraordinary amount of success by continually creating coalitions to address localized problems. Having Austin Voices (or some other culturally adept group) as an intermediary is extremely valuable, both for its role as a cultural translator between partners and as a facilitator to keep partners focused on particular goals. Working on systems, whether campus, school district, city or state, is key for sustainable change. Being aware of power and funding dynamics when doing coalition work is vital, as is the knowledge that the current system is built on fear and a desire to preserve the status quo.

Two artifacts (fortune cookie proverbs) sit next to my computer as I work each day that provide advice equal to any book I have on my bulging bookshelves on how to keep community school coalition work moving forward, even in challenging times. They say, “Better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing perfectly” and “Apply your imagination to any problem that arises.” This is truly the work of community school coalitions.

V. CONCLUSION

Introduction

Community Schools as a framework for school improvement would seem to be a commonsense way forward for struggling schools in at-risk communities. In fact, it would seem to make sense for any school in any community. Bring teachers, staff, parents and students together to constantly evaluate and problem-solve about what is working and what is not for the population of students at your school. Consider both the in-school and out-of-school needs of your students as you work together with community partners to reduce barriers, improve conditions and expand opportunities for learning. Grow relationships with parents and community so that they will become your advocates for resources and staffing.

But as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Society is always taken by surprise at any new example of common sense and simple justice, as at a wonderful discovery” (Emerson, 1904). The common sense of community schools challenges long-ingrained habits. It challenges power structures. It challenges those who have a financial interest in the status quo. While we have had a measure of success in Austin implementing the community school framework, it has been a challenge to build the partnerships that sustain the work.

The intent of this study has been practical: To learn how to improve cross-sector partnerships that support community schools. What follows are the findings of this preliminary study, how these findings correlate with relevant literature, recommendations for research beyond the scope of this study and finally, how this research can support the growth and success of community schools.

Summary of Findings

This study proposed two research questions, based on 15 years of work creating and facilitating cross-sector collaboratives to support community schools:

1. How do different organizational cultures, including campus and school district cultures, affect the development and functioning of cross-sector partnerships in community school initiatives? In particular, how is the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships in community schools affected by the level of understanding that partners have of each other's cultures and the ability of partners to navigate cultural differences?
2. How do cross-sector partnerships supporting community school initiatives measure success?

Using qualitative methods, including interviews, review of artifacts and ethnographic strategies for questioning and data analysis, several hypotheses have emerged:

1. Cultural misunderstandings and disconnects do limit the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships. Respondents were clear that school culture, especially at the district level, is difficult to navigate. They were also clear that differences between nonprofit culture, health culture, business culture and education culture were not well-understood, and that issues such as funding, politics, and organizational processes and habits cause friction between partners.
2. Many of the coalitions that were the subject of this study were viewed as successful, based on "achieving their mission." These included coalitions that were created to help schools in crisis, to plan events and to achieve a limited objective, such as repurposing an unused facility. The coalitions that were not viewed as having achieved

their mission were either ones set up to obtain funding (success=getting the grant) or citywide coalitions with broad objectives. The Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC), while not viewed as completely unsuccessful, had not achieved its objectives of spreading the community school framework to more campuses or building long-term sustainability for existing community schools. As one respondent stated, “The more narrow the organizing principle, the better. Or the more likelihood for success and sustainability in the long term.” The card sorting exercises also showed that coalitions that were closer to the affected community and that included more grassroots participation had a stronger feeling of success than citywide coalitions whose members are mainly institutional organization leaders and elected officials.

In addition to these two hypotheses connected to the research questions, several other related hypotheses emerged:

1. Coalition success is virtually impossible without an intermediary organization acting as a cultural bridge and translator. All respondents used terms like “bridge builder,” “translator,” “intermediary,” and “catalyst” to describe this key role. Across the country, as more schools adopt the community school framework, many of them are trying to do this work without an intermediary organization, which is contrary to what has been the norm as recommended by the Coalition for Community Schools over the past three decades (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011). It may seem easier for schools or school districts to be in charge of community school development, but respondents made it clear that cultural and political differences make it difficult for school districts to develop and sustain the kind of partnerships that the community school framework demands without an intermediary.

2. Coalition partners use different meanings for words that are important to the successful implementation of community schools. The benefit of using ethnographic questioning strategies and focusing on how respondents use language is that you begin to see differences that are normally glossed over. For example, the word “community” was used in at least four different ways by respondents: a geographically bounded place, a particular group identity, as the “other” and as an identity that is constructed or built. School districts may talk about “community engagement” and mean something very different from what partners, community organizers or parents mean. The word “education” was also used in four different ways with very different implications.

This is important for two reasons. First, partners can make misleading statements, based on their use of a term. “We have done community engagement” may mean that you held one meeting with a dozen people in attendance, but you haven’t taken the time to understand the various “communities” that exist within a particular school or neighborhood. Second, partners may miss opportunities for deepening their work. If, by education, you mean something that is done to people, you might say, “We need to educate the parents about x.” This can be demeaning, especially if you haven’t taken time to listen to parents about what they do understand or what their experience with education has been. Perhaps, as Spradley would say, we need to take on the roles of listener and learner rather than speaker and teacher (1979).

3. Tension exists between the school district and partners, based on issues of politics, power, funding and differing approaches to supporting schools. While hopeful that conditions could improve, every respondent spent considerable time describing conflict between partners and the school district. Respondents are dedicated to the long-

term mission of strengthening schools and communities, but it was clear that the work is difficult, especially if district leadership is not invested in the principles of community schools. Repeated cycles of top-down, draconian intervention strategies at struggling campuses, including school closure, were contrasted with positive, solution-focused community school strategies.

4. Grassroots participation in partner coalitions increases the likelihood for successful outcomes. Several respondents saw cross-sector partnerships as being places for institutional leaders and professionals to work together. Other respondents pointed out the many successes that have occurred when participants from the affected community are included in community school planning. It is clear from the card sorting exercise that coalitions with more grassroots participation were perceived as more successful in achieving their goals.

5. Agreement on mission is key to the success of a coalition. Most respondents mentioned finding “win-wins,” “looking for common ground,” or some other way of meeting the needs of all partners. Connecting the needs of the school district (attendance, enrollment, academic achievement) with those of other partners was seen as important. Austin Voices and its partners have a long track record of looking for these connections. Superintendents may struggle to see the connection between health services and attendance, or how affordable housing affects enrollment. These connections are not always obvious, and the kind of listening that is done in ethnographic research is extremely valuable. One phrase used during an interview can become an important driver of cross-sector work. For example, while interviewing teachers during Webb Middle School’s crisis around closure in 2007, the word “instability” kept being used by

teachers. I would not have thought of that word to describe why the school was struggling. No district administrators or state monitors were using this word. A deeper examination of what teachers meant helped us understand that high student mobility at Webb made it almost impossible to the school to achieve academic success as a campus. Partners gathered to create strategies to increase family stability, including starting a Family Resource Center with a social worker. Within one year, student mobility had dropped by 1/3 and academic achievement had improved significantly. These changes came from listening carefully to those closest to the issues, not from gathering executive directors in a room with a whiteboard.

Connections to the Research Literature

The literature review in chapter two reminds us of the complexities of this work, with intersecting literatures around community schools, education reform, school improvement, community development and organizing, cross-sector and collective impact collaboratives, organizational theory, constructivism and culture. In most cases, the literature supports the findings of this study, but the study also illuminates the research and suggests new directions for the work. Given the amount of research covered in the literature review, displaying the relevant research for each hypothesis in a table seemed the most reasonable way to organize the information. Table 20 below connects the literature review with the seven hypotheses that emerged from the research study.

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| Hypothesis: Cultural misunderstandings and disconnects limit the effectiveness and sustainability of cross-sector partnerships. | |
|--|---|
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Rubin (2009), Wolff (2010), Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank (2011), Schein & Schein (2017)•Bryson, Crosby, & Stone (2006), Henig et al (2015)•Bolman & Deal (2013), Schein & Schein (2017)•Tyack & Cuban (1995), Mehta (2013)•Geertz (1973), Hiebert (1983), Schein & Schein (2017)•Hall (1976)•Schein & Schein (2017) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">•A lack of insight into or understanding of one's own organizational structure of the structures of other participants' organizations (especially a lack of understanding of how schools and school districts are structured) may lead to feelings of frustration and powerlessness.•Competition and misunderstanding are to be expected in cross-sector partnerships, and trust between partners is paramount for long-term success.•Organizational culture, in most cases, is emerging and ever-changing. Organizations can be seen through four frames: structural/strategic, human resources, political and cultural.•The organization of school districts experiences a tension between corporate organization, focused on efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and student and community-centric organization. Schools can fall into the trap of valuing the measurable over the meaningful.•People belong to multiple "cultural frames" with attached social settings. These can include work, community, faith, family and other cultural identities.•Cultures may be high context (culture is understood by participants with few explicit rules) or low context (participants are oriented to the culture with strict rules and procedures).•Understanding a culture includes knowing how it views leadership, makes decisions, sets goals, how it uses language, how it view relationships, why it exists and how it views time and space. |
| Hypothesis: Many of the coalitions that were the subject of this study were viewed as successful, based on "achieving their mission." | |
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Gold (2018)•Henig et al (2016) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Cross-sector collaboration can be defined as "an alliance of organizations that together have a role in solving a problem and achieving a shared goal."•One of the goals of large cross-sector collaboration is to reduce duplication and inefficiency, but a national survey of large education collaboration found most large cities with multiple competing collective impact collaborations. |

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| Research | Connections |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Henig et al (2016), E3 Alliance (2020), McDermott (2011) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The concept of student-oriented measurable outcomes and “objective data-driven decision making” is also at the forefront of collective impact initiatives, whereas community school cross-sector initiatives measure their success using a broader set of outcomes. Collective impact “roadmaps” typically set goals such as such as kindergarten readiness, 3rd and 8th grade reading levels based on standardized testing, high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment and completion. With collective impact emerging in the late 2000s at the same time that <i>No Child Left Behind</i> was in its heyday with state and local education agencies adopting national targets for academic achievement, it makes sense that Strive and similar efforts would adopt outcome measures similar to those mandated by NCLB. What is missing, according to Henig et al., are data indicators that reflect the process steps necessary to reach larger goals, or that reflect the work of the multiple organizations working collectively. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deich, Padgett, & Neary (2019), Mehta (2010), Ravitch (2011), Bryk et al. (2017) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The complexity and difficulty of collecting and using data in a collective effort which may far outweigh the usefulness of that data, given the time spent developing data sharing agreements, policies and practices across a large number of organizations (Deich, Padgett, & Neary, 2019), and the dependence of the initiative on school district data, including standardized testing data, which may reflect changing and inconsistent measurement standards at the local, state and federal levels (Mehta, 2010; Ravitch, 2011; Bryk et al., 2017). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bryson, Crosby, & Stone (2006) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some partners may carry with them an “internal logic” that sees success as the development of “processes, norms and structures,” while other might see “inclusive democracy” as the measure of success. Success may also be “. . . the creation of a ‘regime of mutual gain’ that produces widespread, lasting public benefits at reasonable cost and taps into people’s deepest interest in and desire for a better world” (p. 51). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Donahue (2004) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Donahue proposes three criteria for assessing the success of cross-sector initiatives: simply existing as a collaboration, meeting the “organizational imperatives” of the collaborating partners, and creating more value to the public than other “feasible alternative arrangements.” |

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| Hypothesis: Coalition success is virtually impossible without an intermediary organization acting as a cultural bridge and translator. | |
|---|---|
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank (2011) •Driscoll, Boyd, & Crowson (1998), Huxham & Vangen (2005), Pittinsky (2019) •Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin (2005), Pittinsky (2009), Uhl-Bien & Marion (2011) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A lack of understanding of the complexity of schools and school districts is a barrier for partners seeking to provide a service or enact change (which is a key reason that the Coalition for Community Schools recommends that an experienced intermediary organization be in place as a bridge between partners and community schools. •Without an intermediary, partnerships are likely to encounter the difficulties, including political infighting, leadership issues, lack of resources, limitations imposed by confidentiality and data use restrictions, poor communication, and conflicting cultures, all leading to a lack of effectiveness by the group. Cross-sector structures that do not address power imbalances between smaller and larger partners, grassroots and institutional partners, or even those with a deeper commitment to the work at hand, will struggle to effectively collaborate. •Using a culturally adept bridge organization, or intermediary, to help the cultures mesh together in productive and positive ways can help a collaborative problem-solve and move past cultural conflicts. |
| Hypothesis: Coalition partners use different meanings for words that are important to the successful implementation of community schools. | |
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Geertz (1973), Spradley (1979), Bonner & Tolhurst (2002) •Schein & Schein (2017) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The semiotic approach to culture helps us understand the conceptual world in which people live. People use symbols that refer to other things. Symbols have three elements: the symbol, what it refers to and the relationship between that thing and the symbol. •How does a culture use language? While people may speak the same language, cultures and subcultures have distinctive jargon and uses of language that are barriers for outsiders. There may also be unwritten rules about where and when things are said or not said. Words may also have differing interpretations across groups. For example, the word funding would have slightly different connotations for someone from a nonprofit, a school, a funder, a business and a community member. |

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| <p>Hypothesis: Tension exists between the school district and partners, based on issues of politics, power, funding and differing approaches to supporting schools.</p> | |
|---|--|
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Forrer, Kee and Boyer (2014) •Warren and Mapp (2011), Lawson and Van Veen (2016) •Mehta (2010), McDermott (2011) •Boumgarden & Branch (2013) •Hess (1999), Huxham & Vangen (2005), Ravitch (2011), Henig et al. (2015) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public institutions, including schools, “. . . must negotiate agreements with a variety of actors, with whom they may have little leverage or no direct control, but instead are connected through contractual or ad hoc arrangements in horizontal relationships that involve the development of reciprocal trust and mutual accountability” (p. xix). •While there is extensive literature on distributed leadership in an educational context, there is less research on the ways that schools share power and decision-making with communities, including the development of cross-sector partnerships in schools. •While <i>No Child Left Behind</i>, which became the national approach to school reform in 2002, claimed to come from a positivistic framework based on evidence-based practices, school policy and school improvement practitioners knew that it was rife with ideology, organizational beliefs (and pseudo-beliefs), and power politics. •The Coalition for Community Schools model may represent an ideal, but it often does not match the reality on the ground, where funding, governance, competition, changes in campus and district leadership and local politics may take precedence over systems-building efforts by a community school collaborative. •While there may be good reasons for having more than one local collective impact education initiative (splitting up a large geography into more manageable areas of focus, for instance), more common reasons include the founding of new initiatives to supersede or even compete with older ones, opportunities for major funding, including federal grants, requiring the establishment of a new collaboration, the inability of local education leaders to navigate power and relational issues leading to fragmentation, and disagreements over core school reform strategies, including charter schools and community schools (Hess, 1999; Huxham & Vangen, 2005 ; Ravitch, 2011; Henig et al., 2015). |

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| Hypothesis: Grassroots participation in partner coalitions increases the likelihood for successful outcomes. | |
|--|--|
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Warren (2011) •Wolff (2010), Kania & Kramer (2011), Hickman (2016) •Pearce & Conger (2003), Rubin (2009), Pittinsky (2009) •Hess (2009) •Huxham & Vangen (2005), Pittinsky (2019) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Warren confirms that grassroots organizing can create new partnerships, advocate for resources and play a key role in school transformation. •Cross-sector collaborations also struggle with finding an organizational structure that meets the needs of all of the partners. Often, collaborations borrow structures and processes from the corporate or nonprofit sectors, which may be comfortable to some partners, but may be disempowering to community members and grassroots organizations. •Shared leadership includes teachers, staff and community partners. New practices and routines have to be developed to make shared leadership sustainable, including meetings, agendas, committees and culturally responsive practices. •Community change strategies can be focused on community organizing, community building, community development and comprehensive community change initiatives. The roles of grassroots and institutional partners may change depending on the types of strategies being used. •Cross-sector structures that do not address power imbalances between smaller and larger partners, grassroots and institutional partners, or even those with a deeper commitment to the work at hand, will struggle to effectively collaborate. (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Pittinsky, 2019). |

Table 20. Connections to the Research Literature

| <p>Hypothesis: Agreement on mission is key to the success of a coalition. Most respondents mentioned finding “win-wins,” “looking for common ground,” or some other way of meeting the needs of all partners.</p> | |
|--|---|
| Research | Connections |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bryson, Crosby, & Stone (2006), Cannon (2009) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cross-sector partnerships, educational coalitions and alliances form for a number of reasons, including a crisis in a particular neighborhood or school, a funding opportunity, replication of initiatives found in other cities, or grassroots organizing to bring about some needed change. Over the years, faith-based and social justice movements have also been active in forming education coalitions. Whatever the case, there is something that must inspire individuals and organizations to attend meetings and do coalition work |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hess (1999), Chaskin (2000) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Another problem noted in studies of Comprehensive Community Initiatives is that short-term community goals and objectives did not align with the goals set by professional staff and funders. While CCIs were mandated to engage communities, this often did not translate to communities having control over planning or funding, with top-down planning and implementation the norm. Given the histories of power and resource inequities, this created tensions between foundations, intermediary organizations and community members. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wolff (2016) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The failure to address competition is a weakness in the collective impact model because the model emerged from a “top-down business consulting experience . . . not a community development model (p. 3). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rubin (2009), Henig et al. (2015) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Decision-making, leadership, facilitation, strategic planning, the role of funders and other organizational considerations can take up valuable time and energy during the formative period, with no short-term results supporting the group’s mission. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Forrer, Kee and Boyer (2014) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public institutions, including schools, “. . . must negotiate agreements with a variety of actors, with whom they may have little leverage or no direct control, but instead are connected through contractual or ad hoc arrangements in horizontal relationships that involve the development of reciprocal trust and mutual accountability” (p. xix). |

Reflections on the Research Literature

A number of the books and articles referenced in the table above have become friends that walk with me as I continue to try to understand cross-sector partnerships. It was helpful to have studies that showed how difficult these partnerships are to create and sustain, including the Wallace Foundation work in 2015 and 2016. Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2005) did a great job in breaking down the various agreements that partners must negotiate to work successfully. Hess (1999, 2009) and Huxham and Vangen (2005) dove into the power dynamics that make work between grassroots activists and institutional partners both promising and difficult. Schein and Schein (2017) provide signposts for the continuing of organizational cultures, including the ways that words and symbols play important roles in how we understand each other (or not).

Surprising to me was the lack of literature that explained school culture in the ways the I, as a teacher, see as so obvious. Mark Warren (2011, 2014) comes the closest in describing how grassroots stakeholders, including parents, intersect with schools. Dryfoos and Maguire (2002) provide some practical examples of the kinds of disconnects partners encounter while working with schools. Khalifa, Gooden and Davis (2016), while focusing on culturally responsive school leadership within the school, do discuss the cultural disconnects that exist between school and community. Still, the cultural guidebook that gives a non-education person an understanding of “public school culture” has yet to be written.

Insights gained from the literature around culture, including semiotics, linguistics and organizational culture, may prove key in helping to unpack the barriers that keep cross-sector partnerships in education from being more successful. For example, the idea

of high context and low context cultures (Hall, 1976) illuminates how not knowing the cultural rules and norms may lead to power imbalances. Symbols that may seem neutral or positive to one partner (the school office) may represent oppression and fear to another. Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames for organizational culture (human resources, power, systems and culture) may open up healthy dialogues between partners about cultural barriers and opportunities for learning.

Perhaps the most helpful book for understanding the potential of cross-sector education partnerships is Hank Rubin's *Collaborative Leadership* (2009), a helpful how-to guide for developing campus and community partnerships. Many of the recommendations fall into the "easier said than done" category, but Rubin does touch on key issues, including power, organizational structures and the life cycle of a collaboration. Rubin supports the idea that a successful collaboration needs a cultural intermediary who will champion, problem-solve and nurture the work.

Significance of Research/Next Steps

The research on cross-sector partnerships to support educational initiatives is in its early stages, with two studies by the Wallace Foundation (2015 and 2016) filling a significant gap. There are still many areas that need more research. Much of the research is in the form of case studies or books that are of the "how to" variety, with advice from one practitioner to another. In particular, the following areas deserve more attention as research questions:

1. What is school culture at both the campus and school district levels? How does school culture differ in low-income schools versus middle or higher-income schools?

2. How does our current model for funding social change help or hinder the success of community schools, including cross-sector partnerships?

3. How are the ways we measure success helpful or harmful to community school initiatives? How does the process of measurement itself affect the outcomes?

4. What do we need to know about health culture, business culture, nonprofit culture, local government culture and other institutional cultures to be able to work more effectively together in cross-sector partnerships? Are there models of research that can be effectively and easily used by local efforts to learn about institutional cultures?

5. How can we develop intermediaries capable of bridging school district, campus, community and partner cultures? How can we develop a model of power-sharing that will honor the involvement of grassroots participants and leaders in authentic cross-sector change efforts?

6. What needs to change in our current national and state education cultures in order for community schools to thrive as a model?

I will say that I have been surprised by several things in doing this research. One is that there is not more written about school culture. With public education an almost universal experience in America, one would think that there would be more written about how schools are structured, how district systems and politics work and how our overall education system functions as a whole. Perhaps the familiarity we have with schools causes people to assume that school culture does not need to be studied. As someone who is drawn to the distinctives of any and every social scene, I see this gap as a missed opportunity to understand and improve education. I will also say that there is a more developed literature in other sectors, including municipal government, higher education,

health and corporate business. However, very little of literature around organizational culture looks at how these sectors interact with either schools or grassroots community partners.

Since I am in the middle of the work every day, I was also surprised by the amount of success that we have had in building coalitions that get things accomplished and are inclusive of the communities they serve. We can always do better, but I think the interviews in the study showed that we have a lot to be proud of.

I also been able to exercise long-dormant ethnographic muscles. Since my experience 35 years ago in India, I have wanted to use these strategies to understand the communities in which we work. From time to time, we have used some of the tools, especially in our school improvement process that focuses on listening to parents and teachers. However, taking time to do the analysis demanded by this study has only made me hungry for more, and I hope this research will be a jumping off point for continued work on cross-sector partnerships.

Limitations of the Research

Although qualitative research studies are valuable for the insights they provide both to researchers and practitioners, there are inherent limitations and weaknesses. As a case study, the information I have gathered through interviews and other strategies cannot necessarily be generalized to other settings and groups. The number of interviews and the time given over to this research study provide for a small sample of the participants in the various coalitions studied. It is given that a larger sample would yield additional information and would provide additional insights. I also am close to the work and was open about my role as a participant observer. While trying to set up the process to limit

the effects of my personal biases and opinions, it is inevitable that these have shaped the information in some way.

My guardrails for this study have been trying to use the methodology created by James Spradley in an integrous way, listening for new information and confirming insights as the time allowed. In a sense, this was a pilot for what would be a much more in-depth study without the limitations of time and personnel.

Conclusion

This dissertation chronicles a 15-year journey that has had one purpose and one purpose alone: to ensure that every community and every child has access to quality public school education. The journey has been fueled by both joy and anger. The joy comes from working in partnership with teachers, parents and community in the many coalitions described in this document. I often hear from these friends how working together brings them a sense of hope and a feeling of power.

My anger comes from the cynical education reformers who would say, “Your community is not worthy of a public school.” On that January night in 2007 when I first heard that Webb Middle School was going to close because of missing test standards for three years, I said to my wife (using that common sense is not so common), “The only reason you would close a school is if the building is falling down. Why not just fix what needs fixing and make the school better?” What I didn’t know then is that closing schools, standardized testing, giving schools away to charters . . . this is all part of a larger game, where the voices of parents and teachers are actively silenced and ignored by those in power. Paulo Freire (2000) says, “The oppressors do not favor promoting the

community as a whole, but rather selected leaders” (p. 143) They choose who they want at the table.

The wonder of community schools and these coalitions is that everyone is welcome at the table. Over the past 15 years, we have seen how teachers, parents, students and community partners all have pieces of the solution for what will improve their school and their community. I always say to our staff that the words of stakeholders are the bricks from which we build strategies.

This study has also shown me that, while attractive, having high-level coalitions with elected officials, heads of organizations, business leaders and so on may be good for a certain limited purpose but it is not good for doing the detailed work of school improvement and community change. Ask an elected official a question and you will always get an answer, whether they know much about a situation or not. That is their job. But if you want answers that are useful, meaningful and reflect the needs and assets of a particular school or community, you need to ask those who are closest to the problem. You need to be asking and listening to teachers, to parents, to nonprofit and social service and health and people of faith who work in the community every day.

The questions that remain are many. How do we build common ground between partners? How do we navigate power and politics? How do we provide every child with the services and supports they need? How do we change the paradigm from one that is narrowly focused on testing and punishment to one that is whole and full and alive with possibility? However we do these things, we do them together.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A: Cross-Sector Partnerships in Community Schools Interview Questions

Cross-Sector Partnerships in Community Schools

Interview Questions (60-90 minutes)

Section 1: Introductory Questions

1. Let's start with your name, your organization/school/institution, and a description of your role.
2. Tell me how you have been involved in working collaboratively with other partners to support schools.
3. What terms would best describe your group or organization? For example, is it a health organization? Higher ed institution? Nonprofit? Government agency? Community group? Use any and all terms that come to mind.
4. You've said that your group is a _____ organization. Can you tell me what you mean by a _____ organization? (example: a health organization).
5. How would you describe the goal or mission of your group or organization? How does your goal or mission align with partnering to support schools?

Section 2: Organizational Culture Questions using Ethnographic Interview (Spradley) Approach

1. Let's talk a little more about "health culture." Let's pretend I don't know anything about "health culture," who is involved, what its goals are, how it works. Help me understand "health culture."

(Note: This is what Spradley calls a "Grand Tour" Question. As the respondent answers, it leads to a series of "mini-tour" questions that go deeper into something that is said. For example, the respondent might say, "Everyone needs a PCP." I might ask, "What is a PCP? Can you tell me more about PCPs and why everyone needs one?" I will also be looking for what Spradley calls "cover terms" that can be part of domain analysis.)

2. How are decisions made in your group or organization? Who makes decisions? (Follow up with other when, where, why, how questions using Spradley's matrix in *Participant Observation*.)

3. Are there values and norms that are very important to you and/or your organization? (this will lead to follow-up questions to further define terms/look for how strongly held values/norms are.)
4. What does collaboration look like in “health culture”? In your organization/group?
5. In “health culture” and/or your organization/group, what elements are needed to accomplish change/achieve goals? (ex. time, relationships, funding, policy change, etc. This will lead to a comprehensive list of elements that will be used in a card sorting exercise and follow-up question to determine ranked importance.)

Section 3: Being Part of an Education Collaborative

1. Describe for me what it is like for your organization/group to work with schools. What has worked? What has been challenging?
2. Describe for me what your experience has been like working with other partners in an education collaborative? What has worked? What has been challenging?
3. What could a well-functioning education collaborative achieve? What would success look like?
4. Is there anything you would like to tell me that is relevant to our conversation? Any ideas?

Thank you!

Follow-up Interviews

The follow-up interviews with selected respondents will be used for validation of various terms and cultural descriptions, including comparing data between respondents from the same cultural sector. I will use Spradley’s card-sorting methods to draw comparisons between terms (i.e. what would be the difference between x and y), look for additional cover terms and domains and to validate domains as they begin to emerge.

For example, in revisiting Section 2, question 5 (what elements are needed to accomplish change?), I would review the answers given in the initial interview. I might use card sorting to rank order the elements by importance, difficulty, or other criteria suggested by the interview. I might ask a contrast question (how is element x different from element y), looking for further cultural meaning. This same pattern can be used on many of the initial interview questions.

I will also be building meaning from multiple interviews. For example, Section 3, question 3 (what would a well-functioning education collaborative achieve?), I might combine answers from all of the initial interviews into a card sorting exercise, looking for relationships between terms, differences, rank order importance, and further clarification.

For example, respondents might say “student success” and “stronger families”. I could ask “How are these two outcomes similar? Different? What does student success mean? Are there relationships between different possible outcomes, with one dependent on another? Most of these questions would be exploring taxonomic relationships in the follow-up interviews.

The data that emerges from the interviews will only be a start in understanding how cultural differences affect the success of educational collaboratives. This is a new area of exploration and testing the research process is as or more important at this stage than coming up with conclusions about my research questions.

APPENDIX B: Texas State University IRB Approval



The rising STAR of Texas

In future correspondence please refer to 8064

February 7, 2022

Allen Weeks
Texas State University
601 University Dr.
San Marcos, TX 78666

Dear Allen:

Your application titled, 'Cross-Sector Partnerships in Community Schools' was reviewed by the Texas State University IRB and approved. It was determined there are: (1) research procedures consistent with a sound research design and they did not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. (2) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (3) selection of subjects are equitable; and (4) the purposes of the research and the research setting are amenable to subjects' welfare and produced desired outcomes; indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and participation is clearly voluntary.

In addition, the IRB found you will orient participants as follows: (1) verbal informed consent is required; 2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data; (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects; (4) Participants will not receive compensation for participation in this project.

**This project was approved at the Exempt Review Level
This project does not involve in person research activities with participants**

Check the IRB website frequently for guidance on how to protect participants. It is the expectation that all researchers follow current federal and state guidelines. Approved research activities did not indicate face-to-face research with human subjects.

The institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments, please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subject's review, your application, and this approval are maintained in the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance.

Report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. Notify the IRB of any unanticipated events, serious adverse events, and breach of confidentiality within 3 days.

Sincerely,

Monica Gonzales
IRB Compliance Specialist
Research Integrity and Compliance
Texas State University

Cc: Dr. James Koschoreck

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS
601 University Drive | JCK #489 | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616
Phone: 512.245.2314 | fax: 512.245.3847 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

This letter is an electronic communication from Texas State University-San Marcos, a member of The Texas State University System.

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