DEMYSTIFYING THE CHARLOTTE WAY: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR EDUCATION IN THE QUEEN CITY

by

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ABSTRACT

CACHE OWENS. Demystifying the Charlotte Way: Towards an Understanding of Collective Action for Education in the Queen City. (Under the direction of DR. JANNI SORENSEN)

This qualitative grounded theory study sought to understand how different stakeholders collaborate to improve schools in Charlotte, North Carolina. 52 diverse individuals participated in this study. A new hybrid approach of collective action, referred to as *accommodating action* is described. The results of this study suggested that there may be three themes that influence how collective action operates in Charlotte: (a) power dynamics, (b) local history and memory, and (c) neoliberal governance. While this study's results identified that many stakeholders align with transformative organizing and social action in theory, in practice strategies much more closely resemble advocacy, civic organizing and social planning. Many aspects of education reform have been approached through a place based lens. Seemingly counterintuitive, this study suggests that an issue based approach may be more effective at facilitating spatial and educational justice. To begin to understand how communities can be more effective at fostering beneficial change, we must first understand what practices are currently being utilized. Education of our children is too important of an issue to leave to chance.

Keywords: *education reform, community organizing, collective action, new south, network analysis*

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And now, I sleep.

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1. Introduction

While much research has been done describing various approaches of collective action in isolation little research has examined how different methods coexist within a particular context. This is particularly true in the Southern context. Beyond the Civil Rights era, research on how the unique history and character of the South influence social action today is minimal. This study attempts to fill this gap by taking an in-depth look at approaches to change in Charlotte, North Carolina. Specifically, this work examines how groups across the city strategize around one common issue: education in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. This study does not focus on specific education policies, but will instead focus on ways individuals, grassroots organizations and local organizations address challenges in the local education system.

Findings from this study suggest that in Charlotte a hybrid model of collective action is utilized to improve schools. I call this hybrid approach to collective action "accommodating action", that subtly alludes to the cordial, southern hospitality, and politeness that was observed time and time again.

The results of this study suggested that there are three themes that influence how collective action operates in Charlotte: (a) power dynamics, (b) local history and memory, and (c) neoliberal governance. While this study's results identified that many stakeholders align with transformative organizing and social action in theory, in practice strategies much more closely resemble advocacy, civic organizing and social planning. Many aspects of education reform have been approached through a place based lens. Seemingly

counterintuitive, this study suggests that an issue based approach may be more effective at facilitating spatial and educational justice.

This work is important because knowledge about what strategies are currently being used, by whom, and to what outcome, can lead to more intentionality in the way stakeholders in the city address issues in education.

Charlotte somehow feels both extremely southern and not at all. This is perhaps due to the way the city has embraced the "New South" concept. The re-framing of what it means to be "Southern" is entangled with neoliberal policies and attitudes, historical legacies of institutionalized racism and oppression, strong and deep-rooted religious influences, changing demographics, and economic shifts. This research will aim to unpack all these factors to better understand collective action for education within the context of a "New South" globalizing city.

Ever since Saul Alinsky burst onto the Chicago scene with his confrontational form of organizing, researchers and activists have been examining the definition, models, frameworks, history, challenges, and opportunities associated with community organizing. Cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit are home to thriving networks of activists and organizers, and many studies have been rooted in these places (Grengs, 2002; Hamilton and Chinchilla, 2001; Narro, 2005; Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1986; Shirley, 2009). Throughout history, massive movements have sprouted out of these cities leading to local, and sometimes national, policy change. Failing schools and unequal conditions in schools are the catalyst for organizing and protests on a regular basis in many major cities. However, in Charlotte, it is harder to pinpoint the pulse of activists and organizers. People are definitely engaged in discussions around education, but the activities often fly under the radar.

At first glance, organizing in Charlotte is more institutionalized and timid. It is less like the radical Alinksy style of organizing in Chicago or other places. Work here often takes the shape of collaborative problem solving, or appeasing communities by working on the problems in a publicized and visible way. For example, when a national study published by the Equality of Opportunity Project ranked Charlotte as the worst major city for economic mobility, local panic was palpable (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, and Saez, 2013). The cities that came in at the bottom of the mobility ranking included:

46. Indianapolis, IN
47. Dayton, OH
48. Atlanta, GA
49. Milwaukee, WI
50. Charlotte, NC

When the study was published, there were a few news articles published out of Milwaukee and Atlanta (Grethen, 2013; Leonhardt, 2013). However, the press coverage was much heavier in Charlotte, NC (Fuller, 2014; Garlock, 2017; Harrison, 2014; Perlmutt, 2014a; Perlmutt, 2014b; Perlmutt, 2014c; Semeuls, 2017). Only in Charlotte did the local government explicitly address the mobility report in future documents and policies (Leading on Opportunity, 2017). Then Atlanta Mayor, Kasim Reed published an opinion piece in the Huffington Post, titled "The Truth About Income Mobility in Atlanta: Why the American Dream Is Alive in Our City" (2013). He largely (and politely) disagreed with the study's findings. He argued that Atlanta's mobility problems were no different than other places in the region, and country at large. Instead, he highlighted the city's strengths and recent accomplishments.

Despite the media coverage in Charlotte, no direct action, protests, or neighborhood led activism resulted. Instead, the city invested millions of dollars into committees, tasks forces, and programs. While there have been slight policy changes, such as an increase in funding for affordable housing, there has been little (visible) grassroots movement. When in 2017, a police shooting of an unarmed black man led to string of large protests, the city's leadership was seemingly shocked at the rage coming from marginalized communities. The protests were seen as outside the norm for Charlotte activists. The fact that many in the city were astonished by the widespread protests highlights how unusual such activity is in Charlotte. Many, as expressed in media coverage, assumed that protestors showed up from other cities (despite this being proven untrue), as the general consensus was that this would never happen in Charlotte (Off, 2016). Thousands participated in both the local women's march and pride parades, two events organized as part of larger, national social movements (Helms and Smith, 2018; Wester, 2018). However, the Scott shooting marked one of the few times protesting resulted from a local occurrence.

Historian David Aaron Moore writes that "Throughout much of its history, Charlotte has been perceived as a non-confrontational kind of city" (Moore, 2008, p. 92). This work aims to formally analyze the "Charlotte Way", when it comes to collective action for education. If there was ever a topic people would be confrontational about, one would think it would be education and the future of our children.

As a researcher with the Charlotte Action Research Project (CHARP) from 2013 to 2018, I have worked with a variety of marginalized groups in Charlotte, particularly in neighborhoods that have historically experienced decades of disinvestment. Their kids attend underperforming schools. Many children qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Higher numbers of school resource officers are present on their school campuses. There is no lack of frustration around the current state of neighborhood schools.

Despite these understandable frustrations, during my time working with residents in the Enderly Park, West Boulevard, North End and Hidden Valley communities, I have observed several processes that appear to be persistent across all neighborhoods. For example, things like seeking the approval of institutions with perceived authority and access to power, a hesitance to ruffle feathers in a major way, a lack of focus on systemic change, and the embrace of charity approaches to social justice issues have been observed in each neighborhood. However, I have also observed attachment to place, a desire to improve quality of life, and a willingness to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders. These observations have led me to wonder how action around social issues actually works in Charlotte.

Thus, through this study I will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

It is unclear whether approaches to community change previously described in the literature will adequately describe the processes in Charlotte. Through this work it is possible that a new hybrid model of collective action emerges that is unique to Charlotte

and/or the New South context. This has the potential to generate a model that better reflects how social action is done in the New South.

To answer these questions I will conduct a thorough analysis of the relationship between local efforts and spatial factors. Understanding how spatial patterns are both shaped by and influence social action has not yet been closely analyzed in geography. I will also explore additional corollary questions such as:

- What specific historical events and/or local policies have contributed to the formation of this specific culture of collective action?
    - Conversely, how has this culture of organizing influenced tactics and strategies?
- What factors have shaped the dominant method of change?
- What are the implications of the dominant model? For the city? For neighborhoods?

Through this exploration I will identify strategies and tactics as they exist in Charlotte's "New South" context. I am curious about the effectiveness of methods currently to achieve education justice. The network analysis will highlight spatial connections between groups and efforts. I will also work to point out the ways in which this approach has shortcomings, and identify issues that may be better addressed through other methods.

Beyond those of us living in the city, why should we care about how groups are working to improve schools in Charlotte? As disparities continues to rise, several aspects of daily life are becoming more contentious in cities across the nation. Affordable housing, public safety, access to health care, and quality schools are just a few of the issues on people's minds. In many ways, how Charlotte communities grapple with struggling

schools could be a sign of things to come for schools in other Southern communities, and as W.E.B Dubois once said, "As the South goes, so goes the nation" (Dubois, 1903, p. 9) .

1.1 The Charlotte Context

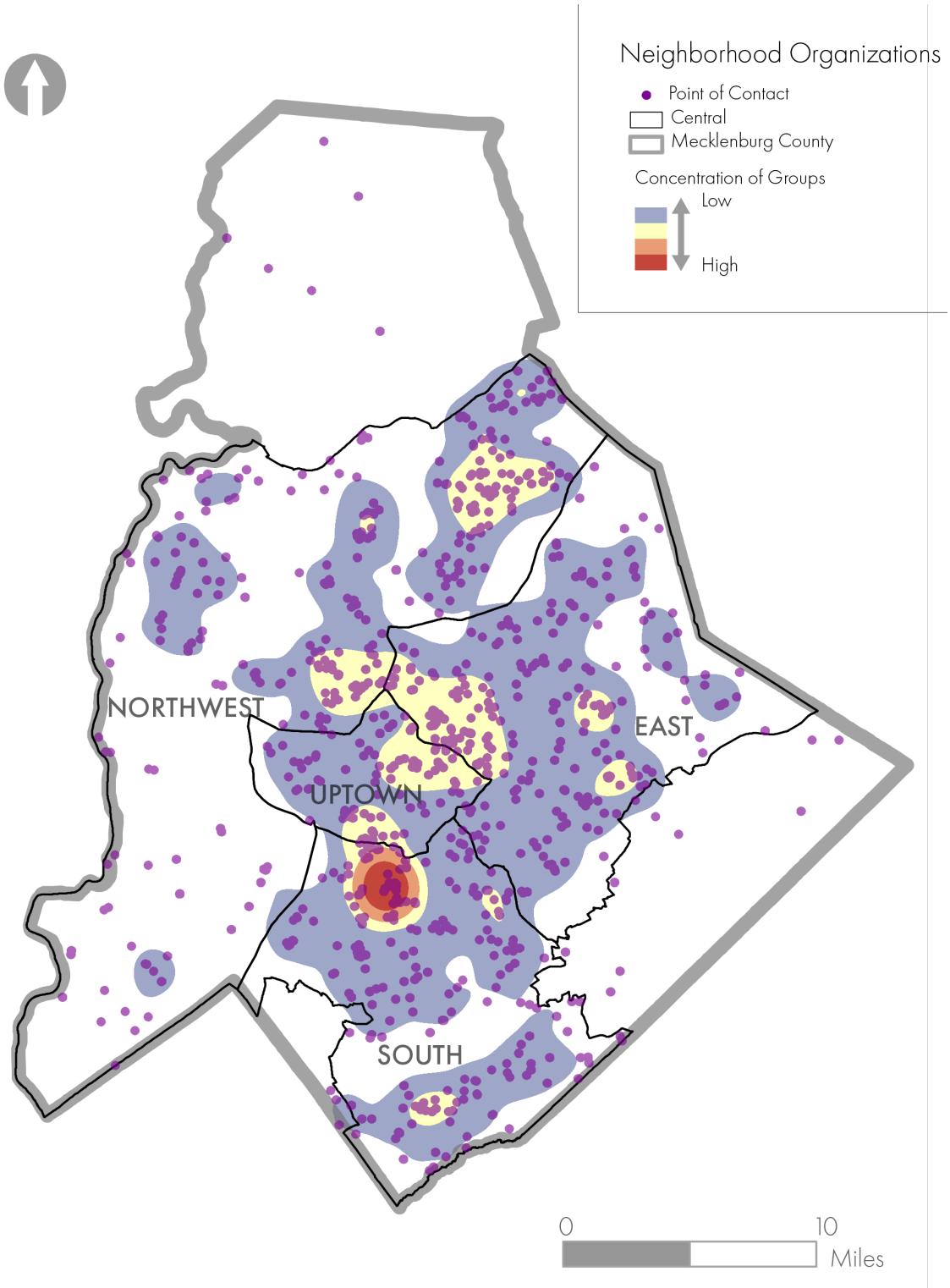
If any city has embraced the "New South" image, it's Charlotte, NC. The moniker pops up all over the place. From The Levine Museum of the New South and New South Kitchen and Bar, to The Center for the Study of the New South in UNC Charlotte's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Despite the prevalence of this "New South" idea, it is unclear how "new" the Queen City really is.

Charlotte faces difficulties when it comes to building a truly inclusive city where every resident can equally pursue a decent quality of life with dignity. Within the city there are distinct geographies of poverty, race and low economic mobility that have persisted over time. These historical patterns of (in)opportunity suggest that perhaps the economic mobility ranking of the city should not have been such a shock.

Going as far back as the 1990s, neighborhoods with opportunity have been concentrated in the city's southeast wedge, a corridor of wealth that stretches into Union County (Portillo, 2015). Additionally, the most marginalized neighborhoods with the lowest incomes are clustered in a crescent west, north and east of uptown. These patterns persist today across a variety of variables.

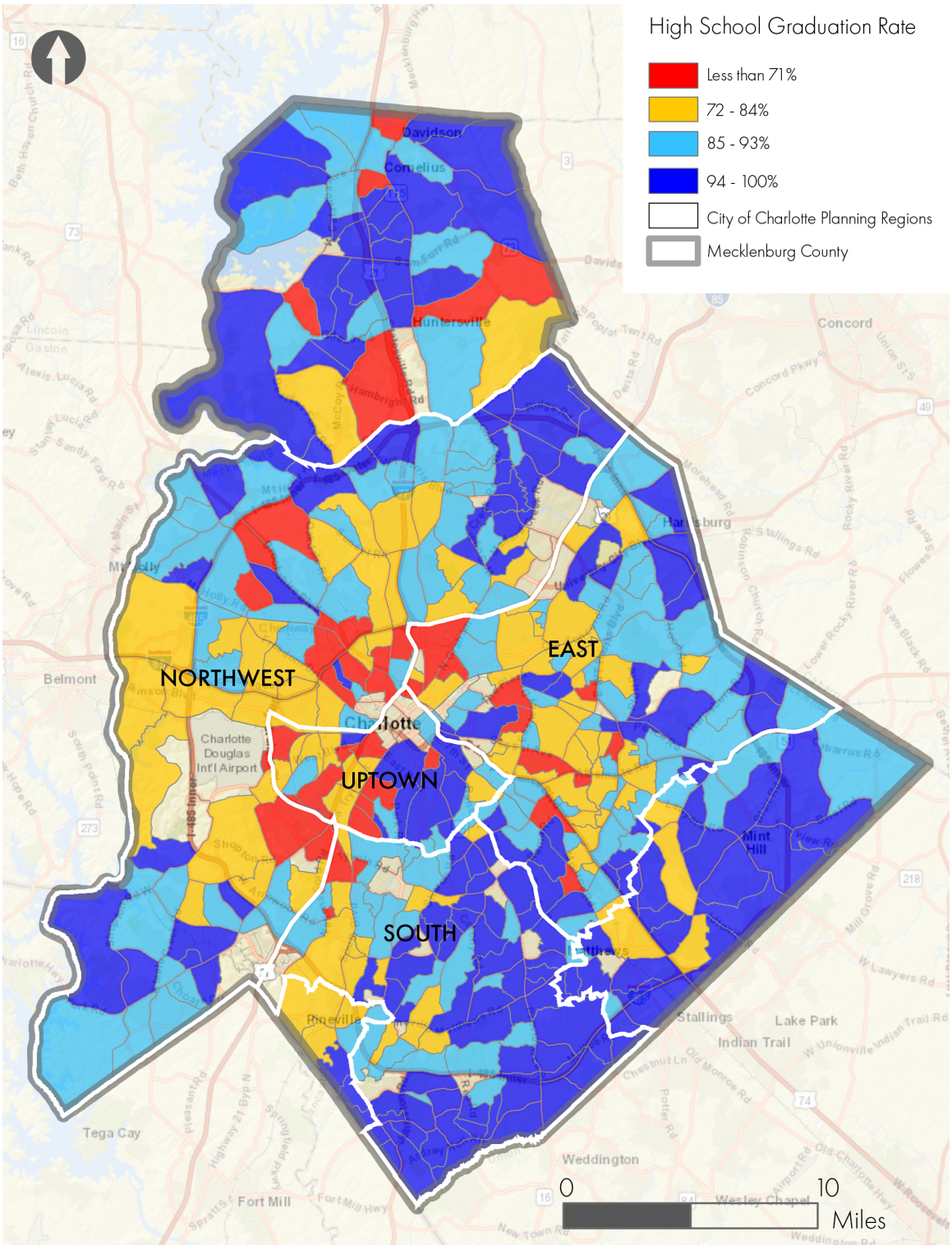
Map 1 shows the concentration of neighborhood organizations and points of contact as collected quarterly by the city. In Uptown and the wedge of wealth, there is a significant hotspot of organized groups and individuals. While there are established organizations in the crescent, the number of individual contacts is much less. This suggests that less people are actively engaged at the neighborhood level in an "official"

capacity in these areas, which could potentially be an important factor when city officials allocate resources to neighborhoods. High school graduation rates and household incomes also follow the crescent and wedge pattern, as shown in Map 2 and Map 6 respectively. It is especially troubling to see that people living in the wedge tend to live longer than their counterparts in the crescent (Map 3). Underperforming schools are also concentrated in the crescent. These schools often coincide with majority minority schools, that are also concentrated in North and West Charlotte (Map 5). Map 6 showcases the overall landscape of high performing and low performing schools in Charlotte. Neighborhoods in the crescent are often without essential amenities, such as grocery stores or quality public parks. This is highlighted by Map 4, a hotspot map that shows grocery store locations across the city. West Charlotte in particular is a documented food desert (Mack, 2016). These maps show a sample of quality of life indicators to highlight how the disparities persist within certain parts of the city.



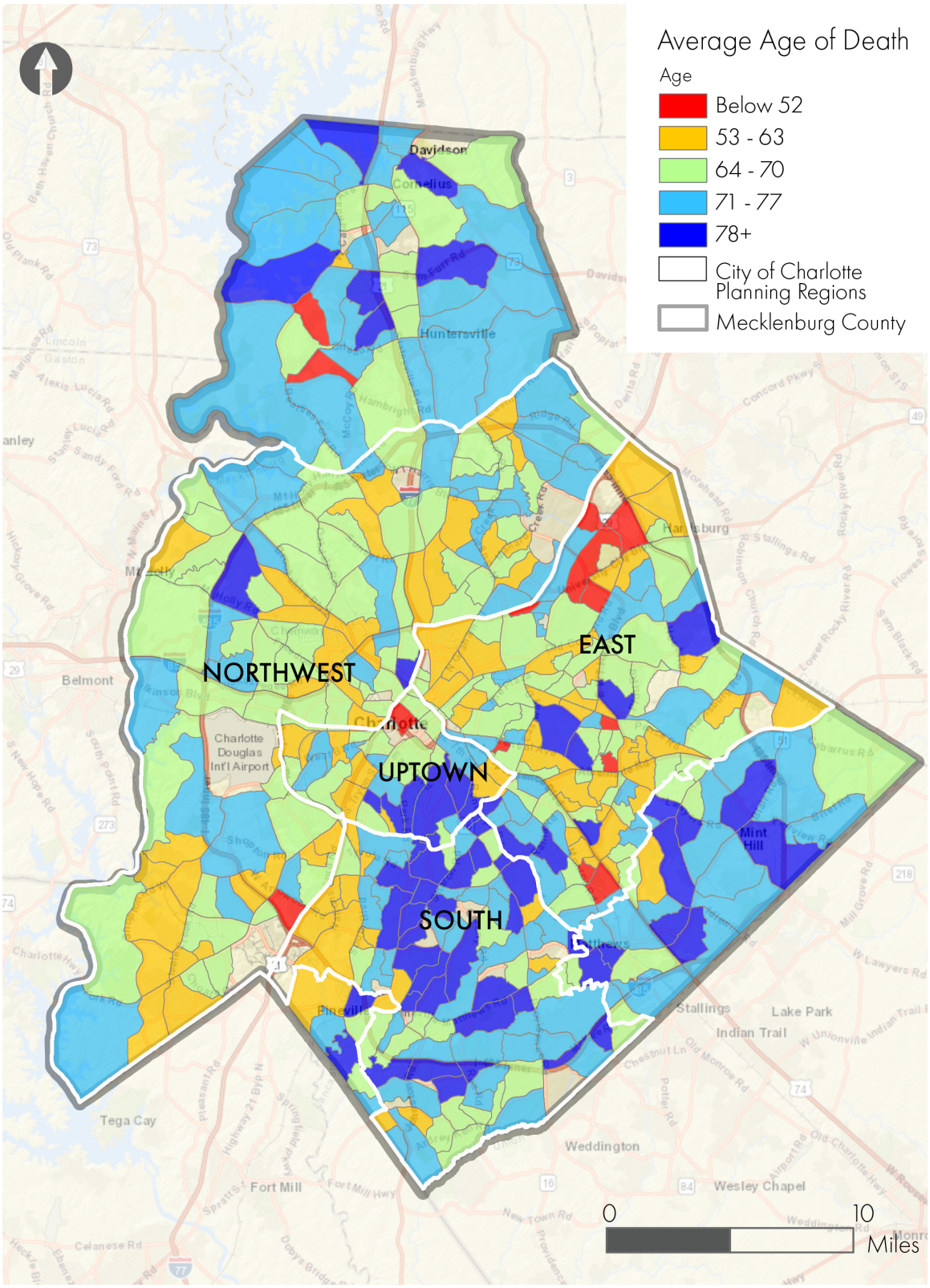
Map 1: Neighborhood Organizations

(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, 2017, cartography by author).



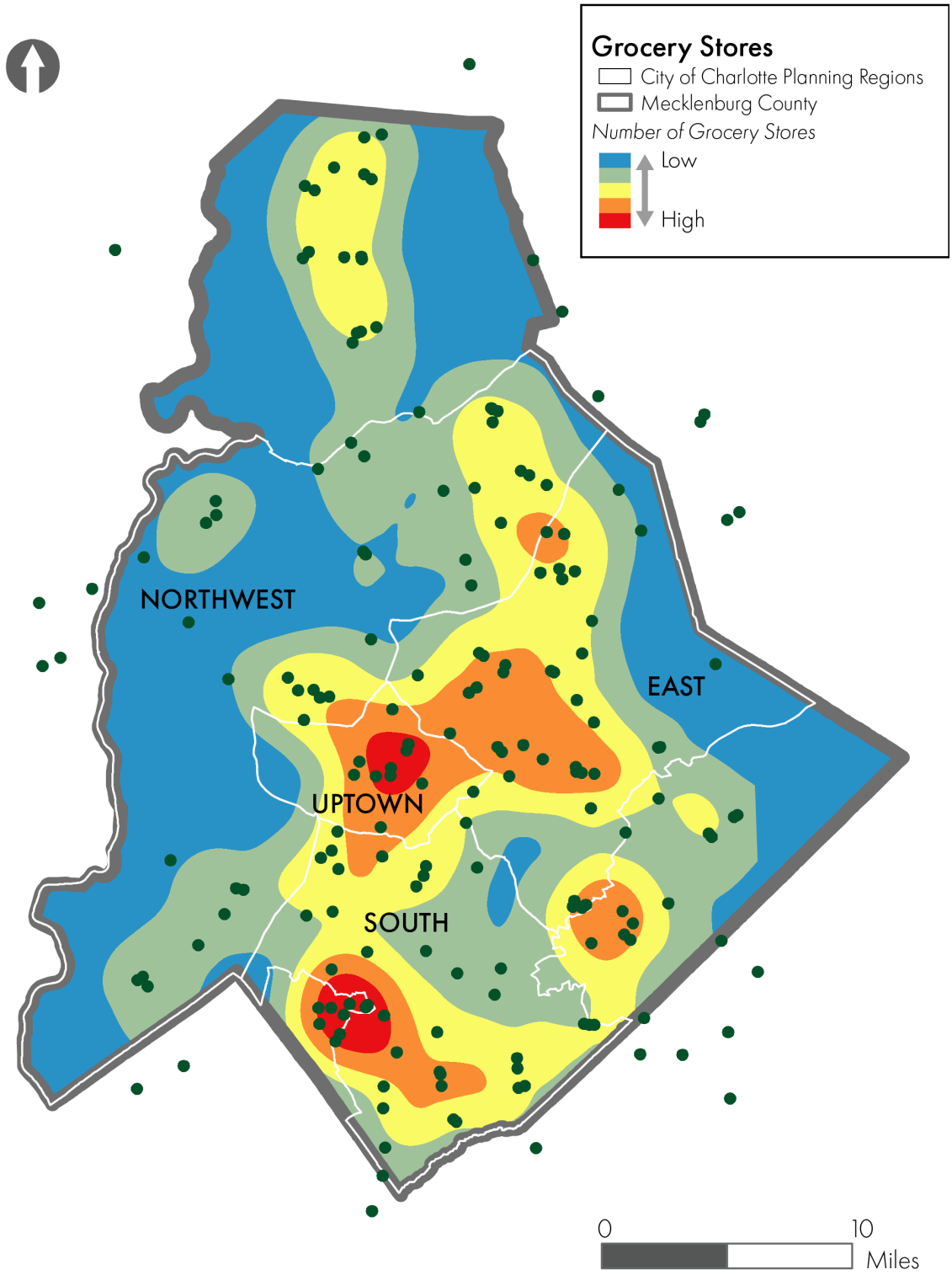
Map 2: High School Graduation Rates

(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, 2017, cartography by author).



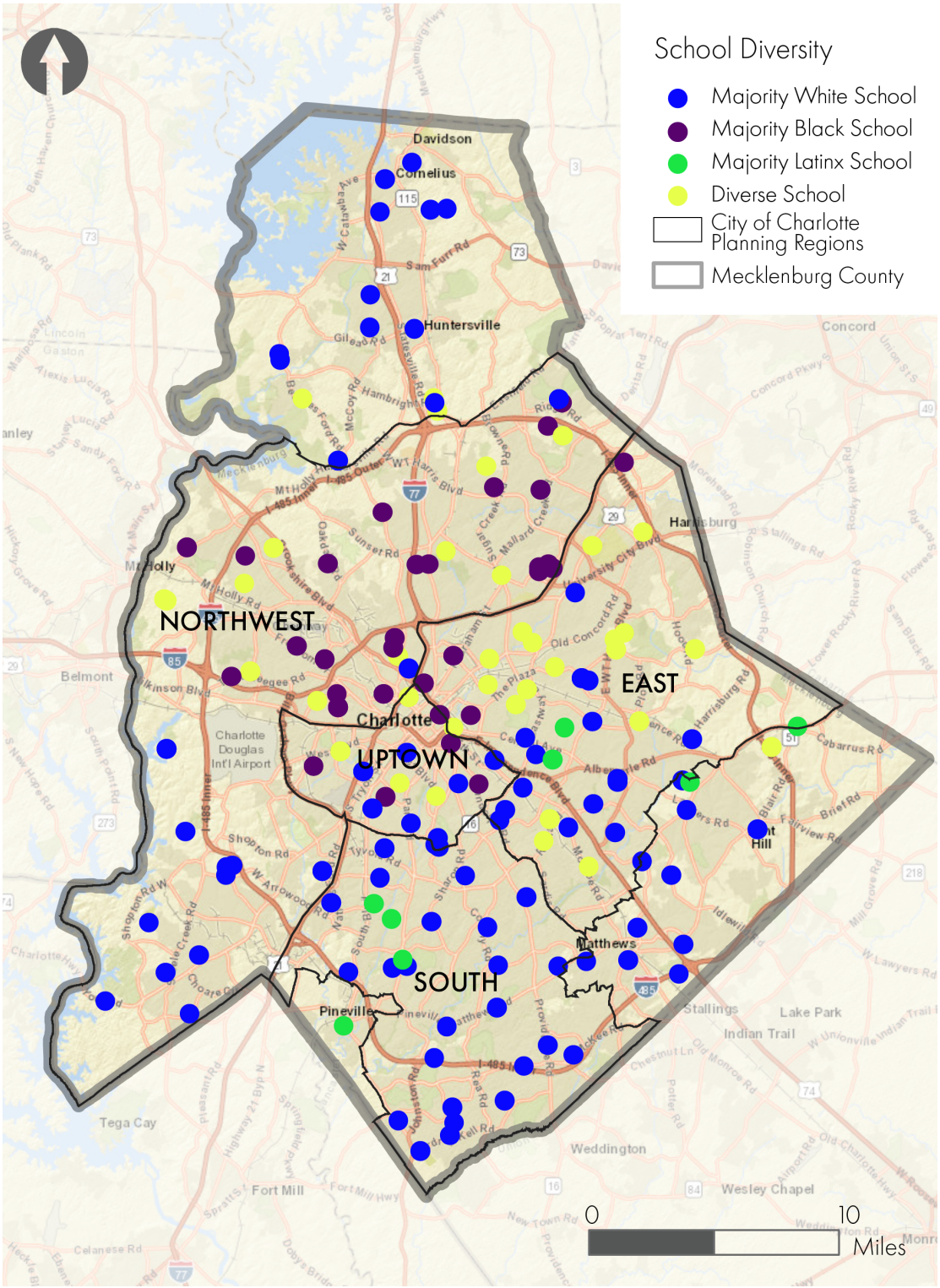
Map 3: Average Age of Death

(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, 2017, cartography by author).



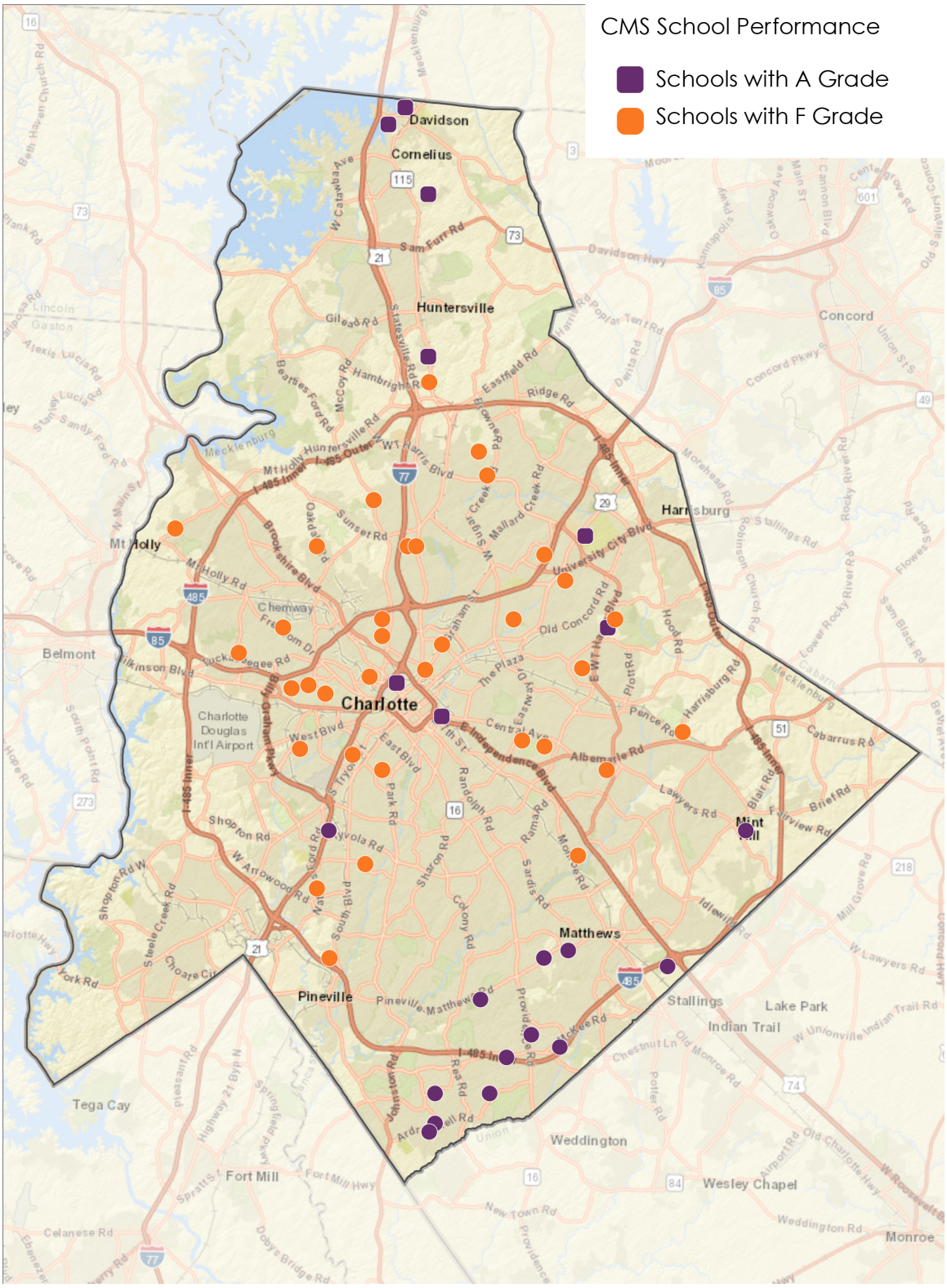
Map 4: Grocery Stores

(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, 2017, cartography by author).

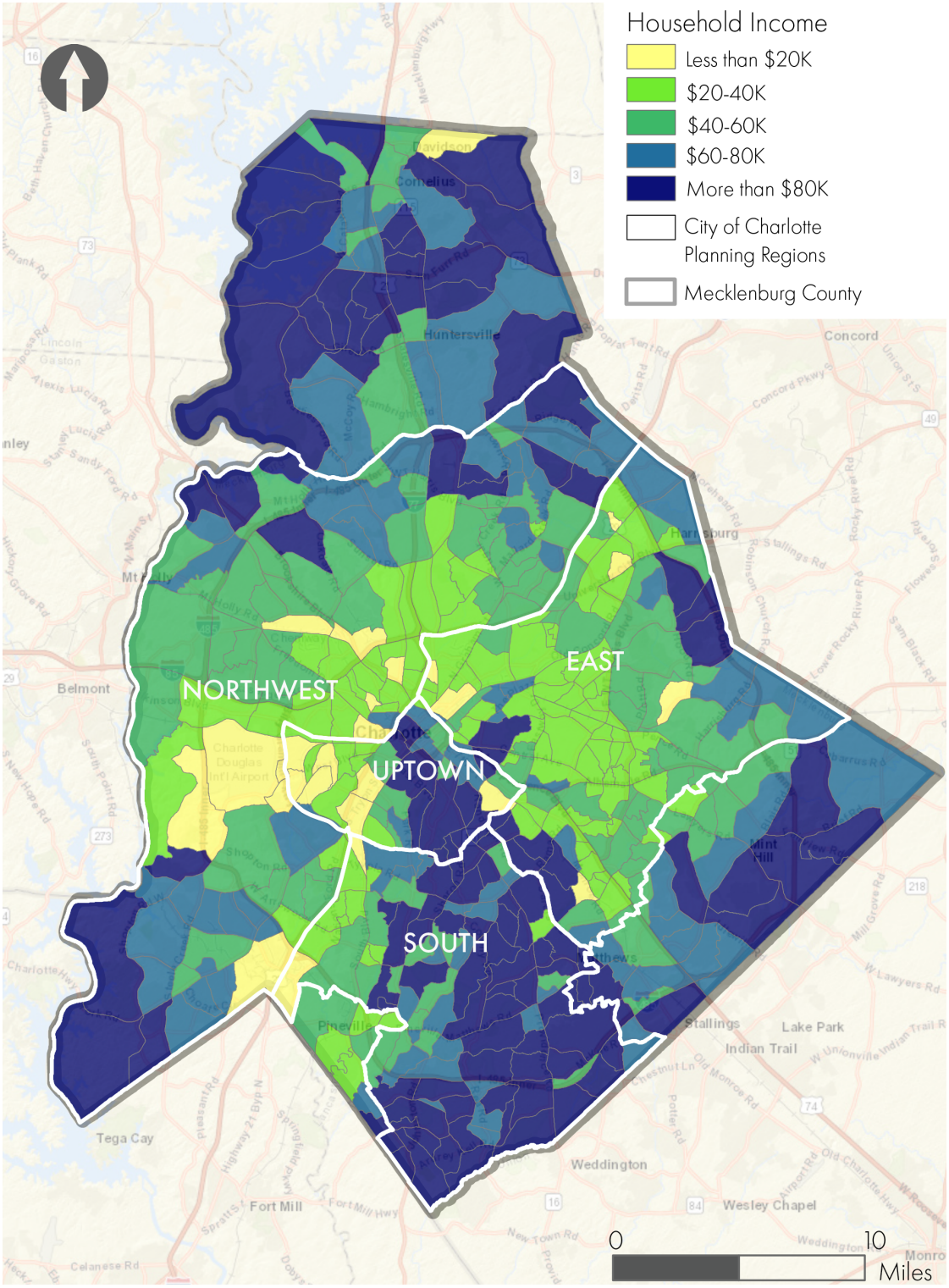


Map 5 : School Diversity

(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, 2017, cartography by author).



Map 6: School Performance
(Data from NC Department of Public Instruction, 2019, cartography by author).



(Data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, 2017, cartography by author).

Map 7: Household Income

Taking a look back can help us begin to understand how Charlotte has evolved into the city it is today. After World War I, Charlotte began its evolution from a slow paced southern town to a global city (Graves and Smith, 2010). Post-war time turned out to be an economic boon for the Charlotte region, as many soldiers stationed at Camp Greene decided to make the city a permanent home (Hanchett, 2017). Growth continued to occur, albeit gradual. At this time the city remained a strictly bicultural city.

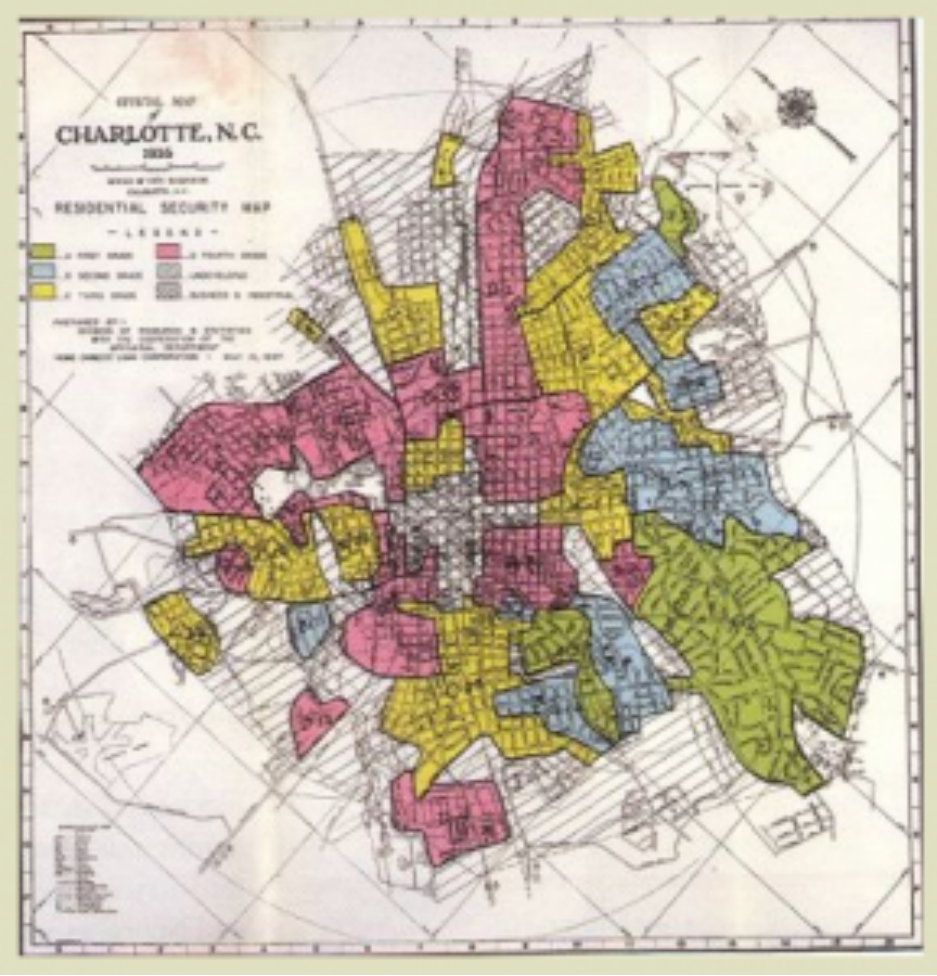


Figure 1: Redlining in Charlotte (Mapping Inequality, 2016)

The geography of the South has undergone radical change, and the same can be said for Charlotte (Graves and Smith, 2010; Price and Diehl, 2004). Suburban sprawl is

rampant throughout the region, a trend that has fundamentally altered notions of community and changed the quality of life for many. Traditionally African American neighborhoods in Charlotte were located just outside the city center. Figure 1 is a historical redlining map in Charlotte, originally produced by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) and recently disseminated by the Mapping Inequality Project (Nelson et al., 2016). Areas in red were notated as "high risk" and black homebuyers were pigeonholed into these areas, while white families were steered elsewhere.

Several areas in red became thriving black communities and neighborhoods. For example, the largest African-American neighborhood, known as Brooklyn, occupied the southern part of downtown, in the area that now includes the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center and Marshall Park (Kelley, 2016). Newspaper articles from the 1950s describe the city's plans to bulldoze the neighborhood, a place that was described as having "narrow streets and darkened alleyways, open ditches and polluted streams" (p.2). However, these depictions do not tell the whole story. While there were blighted areas, "there were also [several black churches], fine houses, businesses and restaurants, a library, hotel and theater" (p. 3). Today Brooklyn no longer exists, however many of the black neighborhoods that emerged as a result of redlining are now experiencing rapid gentrification and displacement (Clasen-Kelly, 2017).

During the era of the Jim Crow South, Charlotte largely avoided major conflict. In the early days of the Civil Rights era, the city's African-American leaders succeeded in desegregating Revolution Park and the city's new airport in the mid-1950s (Hanchett, 2017). Although not completely violence free, Charlotte's Civil Rights events were largely peaceful. For example, Charlotte historian Tom Hanchett writes that Dr. Reginald Hawkins led a march from JCSU to City Hall demanding total desegregation. Cities

elsewhere in the South were meeting such requests with extreme violence, unleashing police dogs and blasting people with firehouses. Instead, then-Mayor Stan Brookshire phoned Chamber of Commerce leaders and quietly arranged for white-black pairs to eat lunch together, effectively integrating restaurants without major commotion (Graves and Smith, 2010; Hanchett, 2017). The chamber approved a resolution asking that all businesses serving the general public be open to people of all races, creeds and color. This act essentially integrated most public places in Charlotte, one year before the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Associated Press, 2013). Tensions did not evaporate overnight, but this voluntary desegregation thrust the city into the national spotlight (Associated Press, 2013).

So, are Charlotte residents and political leaders just pure and kind at heart? Unfortunately, historians argue that decision makers had other motives. Community leaders were concerned about how incidents of violence would portray Charlotte and North Carolina (Graves and Smith, 2010). Distance from the stereotypes of the conventional South was valued. Progress in the New South depended on the maintenance of law and order. During this time the mayor even urged residents to attend a racial harmony rally a week following integration, where he stated that "A large and representative audience will tell the world that Charlotte will not be deterred in its efforts to promote racial harmony and community progress through the fullest possible development of responsible citizenship" (Hanchett, 2017, p. 23). Economic factors are largely suspected as main motives for the emphasis on local peacekeeping. In an era when national businesses were looking to expand south, a welcoming image was paramount. Hanchett argues that "Charlotte's progressive reputation solidified when the city became the U.S. test case for court-ordered busing to integrate schools in 1971 and again when Harvey Gantt won election as the first African-American mayor of a majority-white U.S.

city in 1983" (p. 26). Jim Crow had become bad for business, and Charlotte had big city aspirations.

It could be argued that the same approach to negative publicity is continuing today. It often appears that residents are placated with small forms of recognition, or passive acknowledgement of issues without concrete actions. For example, every year the City of Charlotte recognizes local organizations at the Neighborhood Leadership Awards for their efforts (Ford, 2016). However, these awards do not necessarily lead to resident leaders having more power or influence over city decisions. When Charlotte was named the worst major city for economic mobility, city leaders were quick to establish committees, commissions, and the like to quickly demonstrate action. More recently, when Keith Lamont Scott was killed by a police officer in 2016, officials responded with a "letter to the city" that promised affordable housing, community engagement, employment opportunities and better community policing. These examples, both historic and current, reflect instances of situations that largely avoided major conflict. The city even hired a New York based public relations firm to help them quiet unrest and pinpoint messaging following the Scott shooting (Harrison, 2016). Following a slew of turnover in superintendents, increasing segregation, widening gaps, teacher protests, and more challenges, CMS has responded in a similar way. A PR firm was hired following to deal with many of these controversies. More than 22 task forces have been established. It is unclear whether these examples truly represent how conflict and justice issues are addressed in Charlotte, or if they are highly visible anomalies.

2. Charlotte Mecklenburg School District

CMS was founded in 1882 under the leadership of TJ Mitchell. The first school was located on the corner of East Morehead Street and South Boulevard in the barracks of the Carolina Military Institute. The first school for African-American children was organized in the same year and was known as Myers Street School, located in present day South End (wearecms.com). The district quickly became known as the "largest public school system south of Baltimore" (wearecms.com).

The district continued to grow rapidly. At this time, city schools and county schools were maintained by two separate districts. The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce recommended a committee examine extending the city limits and consolidating the two school systems. The study committee and the Chamber of Commerce concluded that the best solution for local school problems would be to consolidate. Proponents suggested that merging the two districts would result in several advantages, most notably equal educational opportunities for all children.

At the time during and soon after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, Charlotte was very much a segregated city, with black schools and white schools. The schools mirrored the rest of the city, with no integrated hotels, restaurants, restrooms, churches, cemeteries or theaters.

The newly formed district, like many others across the country, struggled with desegregation. Great disparities persisted. A pattern of massive "white flight" emerged, with families moving to the nearby suburban areas of the county as a means of avoiding desegregation. Ten years after the Brown decision, segregation was still the reality in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. In 1964, the system had 88 segregated schools – 57 white and 31 black. This led to one of the most significant court cases in the region's history in 1965:

Swann vs. the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. The Swanns contended that children were able to "transfer out of integrated schools, but not allowed to transfer into them, and that the law should be equally binding. The key complaints of the suit were that 1.) Some dual school zones remained in operation, creating essentially black and white school districts side by side, 2.) the Board of Education permitted transfers out of integrated schools, but discouraged transfers into the schools, and 3.) Most school faculties were completely segregated.

Following a long process, the courts eventually decided that CMS was not desegregated. At the time, approximately 14,000 of the 24,000 black students still attended schools that were all black or heavily black, and most of the system's 24,000 teachers were white (Mickleson, Smith, and Hawn-Nelson, 2017). CMS was given instruction to desegregate schools by 1970. After several proposed plans, a busing plan was approved in 1974. Charlotte became the nation's poster child for successful school integration. Mickleson, Smith, and Hawn-Nelson write that "Charlotte gained a national reputation as a New South city with a favorable business climate and a good place to work and raise a family" (p.24). As previously discussed, the local economy was strengthened following the integration of schools. Corporate executives leveraged the integration plan for their financial gain. The success of the busing plan allowed elites to publicize Charlotte as a "progressive southern city with tranquil and enlightened race relations" (p.19). Charlotte embraced the tagline "Charlotte: The city that made it work" (p.22).

In the early 1990s, the acting superintendent launched a new magnet school program designed to match students' interests and learning styles with particular themes. Another purpose of the program was to replace the once celebrated system of paired

schools and cross-town busing. The magnet school program was developed to accept students through an application lottery process, with acceptance based on a 60:40 race quota (wearecms.com).

The magnet program paved the way for another conflict regarding student assignment. In 1997, Charlotte parent Bill Capacchione sued CMS on the claim that his daughter was twice denied entrance to a magnet school because she was not black. The conflict quickly escalated when six parents joined the case saying that "race-based policies influence everything from how students are assigned to where schools are built. The parents argued that the district's schools were fully desegregated and continued use of race-based policies was unconstitutional" (wearecms.com). Additionally, several black parents joined the defense, seeking to keep the desegregation order in place.

In 1999, a judge ruled that the school system must stop using race as a factor in student assignment plans. In response, a new plan was proposed that would send students to schools closer to home and provide families with choice. In January 2000, plans to enact the new plan were delayed. The board created a citizens task force to make recommendations on the new student-assignment plan. Following this task force a plan was put forth that included the following components:

- giving families a chance to choose a school close to home
- preserving the integrity of choice
- addressing growth in a reasonable way
- offering stability through K-12 feeder patterns

The Board of Education continued to work on a desegregation plan based on the family-choice framework, ultimately approving a new student assignment plan in July 2001 that withstood legal challenges. The plan was put into place for the 2002-2003

school year. Local pride about school desegregation flourished during this time. The district gained national attention for its student achievement and participation in higher-level courses. The district was also recognized by the Council of the Great City Schools in 2001 as one of four top urban school districts for increasing test scores and closing the achievement gap. In September 2011, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools won the Broad Prize for Urban Education. The prize, the largest of its kind, recognizes districts who are simultaneously increasing achievement and closing the achievement gap.

Despite continued celebration of CMS, progress towards desegregation slowly began to be reversed. While reversing school segregation facilitated development, integration soon became undermined by the consistent growth. Residential choice quickly started to influence school choice. Today, CMS is largely resegregated. The resegregation of them deserve special attention because o the city's historic prominence in the country's school desegregation efforts. Today, conflicts over student assignment, growing disparities, and other challenges plague the district. Rapid growth of the area has not made the challenges any easier. Issues surrounding CMS continue to regularly make the news and influence local political elections. When the Leading on Opportunity report was published, lack of equity in CMS was one of the key findings (Leading on Opportunity, 2017). CMS remains in the forefront of residents minds, just as it did in the 1970s.

2.1 Present Day Challenges

While racial integration and busing were major issues facing the district in the 1960s and 70s, those issues and many others continue to present challenges. Today, there are many other topics parents and other stakeholders are also concerned with. These include topics such as school assignment, crime and safety, overcrowding, credit recovery

and district leadership/transparency. These issues only exacerbate long standing issues of race, equity, and segregation.

School assignment is intrinsically linked to each of the aforementioned challenges. Every six years, CMS adjusts its student assignment plan, making changes to schools and boundary lines. The current student assignment process started back in 2015, and CMS said its guiding principles revolved around providing choice, reducing overcrowding and breaking up concentrations of poverty in CMS schools. This is no easy feat, especially when stakeholders have very different views on what a successful student assignment plan looks like.

At just about every meeting regarding student assignment, hundreds turn out to celebrate and bemoan Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' plan to shift boundaries, magnet programs and feeder patterns. Speakers pack meetings and share their different perspectives . Parents and stakeholders often clash on balance between desegregation and neighborhood schools. However, neighborhood schools in segregated neighborhoods don't do much for school diversity. On issues of school assignment, overcrowding, sand school safety, neighborhood groups organize to speak at public meetings, petition school board members, and hold up signs during board meetings. These are issues that are largely dealt with in place based ways.

This is different from the ways issues of credit recovery, equity, race, and district transparency are addressed. When stakeholders coalesce around these issues, it is often done using issue based approaches. People from different backgrounds may serve on task forces around a particular issue. Community members from a wide variety of neighborhoods and backgrounds may organize to show up to school board meetings with

signs and share public comments. These issues have less of a place based lens. These issues have also been the topic of much more research.

For example, the issue of credit recovery is being addressed on a state level. According to WCNC, "interviews with educators, along with analysis of CMS credit recovery records, show the school district allows failing seniors to recover credits online just days before commencement -- often in a single day" (Morabito, 2020). At one school board meeting, speakers from Students For Education Reform, a New York-based nonprofit advocacy group with a North Carolina branch, spoke and addressed issues at the state level. The group requested CMS create a standard credit recovery program for all schools, taking place after school instead of during the school days, with a teacher on duty who can help students master the content covered by the online program (Helms, 2019). Credit recovery is being dealt with as an issue that goes beyond specific neighborhoods, despite its use being more prevalent in low income and minority schools.

While equity, desegregation ,school assignment, crime and safety, overcrowding, credit recovery and district leadership/transparency are some of the most prevalent issues facing the district, they are all interconnected and don't represent an exhaustive list of challenges.

3. Literature Review

This research examines the local education system through the lens of spatial justice. Spatial justice is useful in highlighting how challenges and their respective solutions are the product of both space and society (Soja, 2010). An overview of spatial justice is presented in the following section. Following this, I discuss the predominant approaches to systems change and community organizing models that have emerged in response to injustices, many of those spatial in nature. To begin to understand the culture of collective action in Charlotte, I also include a discussion of the New South, Southern religion, neoliberalism, as well as the relationship between the three. Lastly, I ground these in local context with a discussion of major developments in Charlotte's education system over time. Each of these topics are suspected to play a large role in how groups address education challenges in Charlotte.

3.1 Spatial Justice

This research aims to critically examine approaches to school improvement through a spatial lens. Understanding how spatiality influences education outcomes in Charlotte is a key component of this work. Thus, it is important to ground the work in the concept and theory of spatial justice. To understand social injustices, an in depth look at space and society is needed. Where space and society meet, the concept and practice of spatial justice is visible (Soja, 2010). Spatial justice as a concept can be "a useful guiding tool to understand and reflect on solutions to social injustices that are embedded in the fusion between space and society" (p. 15). Many trace the origins of spatial justice to

Henri Lefebvre's concept of 'right to the city' (Chatterton, 2010; Iveson, 2011; Marcuse, 2009; Soja, 2010).

When attempting to define spatial justice it is important to note that the concept is "polysemic", in that it has multiple meanings in different contexts, meanings that are often contradictory, or even conflicting when deciding what is 'just' and 'unjust'" (Recoquillon, 2014). While the polysemic nature of the concept can make spatial justice difficult to define, it mirrors the polysemic nature of educational equity.

Right to the City

Lefebvre first shared his vision for urban centers in his 1968 text, *Le droit à la ville*. In it, he describes a radical vision for a city with a focus on people as "users", who manage urban space for themselves, beyond the control of the market and/or state regulations (Purcell, 2013). The framework encourages the reclamation of the city as a "co-created space". This idea has become popular with a variety of groups, including activists, academics, and even lawmakers (Purcell, 2013). For example, UN-HABITAT and UNESCO have led an effort to include right to the city language into a broader agenda for human rights. This is done in the hopes that it will encourage urban policies that promote justice, sustainability, and inclusion.

Lefevbre was troubled by the effects that capitalism had on the city, where urban life was reduced to predictable rituals and commodification. In cities, Lefevbre noticed that marginalized communities were especially vulnerable to displacement and injustice. He yearned for city dwellers to "demand…a transformed and renewed access to urban life" (Lefevbre, 1996, p. 174). David Harvey expands on Lefevbre's conceptualization by stating "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban

resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city…the freedom to make and remake our cities" (Harvey, 2008, p.1). Within this framework, the emphasis is equal access to use and influence urban space (Purcell, 2013). Lefevbre argues that since the city is part of everyday life for all people, they are entitled to a right to the city (Harvey, 2008; Lefevbre, 1996; Purcell, 2013). This is largely opposite of what we see today, where the rights of individuals and property owners are typically given priority (Purcell, 2013). The right to the city movement is a "struggle to augment the rights of urban inhabitants against the property rights of owners" (Purcell, 2013, p.142).

Right to the city seeks to empower city residents to shape their environment as they see fit through active (and meaningful) participation, engagement, and mobilization. The rise of spatial inequalities in cities has left many marginalized groups isolated from resources they need to have a decent quality of life. The right to the city concept has inspired social movements and worldwide efforts to move towards what Lefevbre calls an "urgent utopia" (Lefevbre, 2009; Purcell, 2013). Mayer (2012) writes that "The claim for the right to the city has turned into a viral slogan across Europe, North America as well as Latin America" (p.151). Its popularity largely stems from the slogan's ability to fuse together and express issues that have become highly charged over years of neoliberal urban development. The right to the city movement aims to direct power towards the working class, people of color, immigrants, youth and other marginalized groups. Studies have documented how community organizing groups draw inspiration from the right to the city movement (Fisher and Corciullo, 2011; Fisher, Katiya, Reid and Shragge, 2013; Mayer, 2010; Mitchell, 2003). However, questions remain about how right to the city sentiments have translated to tangible change.

Spatial Justice

Ideas about spatial justice have become increasingly present in discussions about a myriad of issues. Debate continues around what exactly spatial justice is, where it fits in to larger conversations, and how it should be addressed. This discussion of spatial justice will focus on the contributions made by those who have been at the forefront of further expanding Lefevbre's right to the city framework. This refers specifically to the work of Edward Soja, David Harvey, and Peter Marcuse. While Harvey indirectly discusses spatial justice in his work about social justice in the city, Soja and Marcuse are explicitly interested in the idea of spatial justice. On many points Soja and Marcuse differ in their approaches.

It is helpful to begin with Harvey's conceptualization of space to eventually reach a working definition of spatial justice. For Harvey, space is intrinsically embedded within social justice conflict. According to Harvey, space can be boiled down to three major aspects. Harvey (2004, p.4) describes spatial relationships as either:

- absolute space: definite position on an (unchanging) coordinate system
- relative space: distance to a common reference point in time and space

or,

- relational space: position within a symbolic system perceived by a particular person or group.

Harvey argues that it is crucial to reflect on the varied nature of space if we are to understand urban processes under capitalism. Harvey justifies this "tripartite division" as being a "useful tool in understanding events occurring around us and to formulate ways of thinking and theorizing about geographical phenomena and processes" (Harvey, 2004,

p. 6). Depending on the issue at hand, one conceptualization may be more salient than the others. Harvey suggests that we use the conceptualization that best fits the question, and to justify the selection along the way.

Incorporating the reflections of Harvey and Marcuse, this study is rooted in Soja's definition of spatial justice where the term is assumed to refer to:

> An intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice. As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them. Spatial justice as such is not a substitute or alternative to social, economic, or other forms of justice but rather a way of looking at justice from a critical spatial perspective. Spatial (in)justice can be seen as both outcome and process, as geographies or distributional patterns that are in themselves just/unjust and as the processes that produce these outcomes. It is relatively easy to discover examples of spatial injustice descriptively, but it is much more difficult to identify and understand the underlying processes producing unjust geographies (Soja, 2009, p.1).

Marcuse and Soja both use Harvey's conceptualizations of space as a jumping off point. However, their perspectives quickly diverge. Both Marcuse and Soja agree the chicken and the egg are related, but they do not agree upon which comes first. Marcuse grounds his work in the right to the city framework, which he views as a rallying cry marginalized groups will mobilize around (Marcuse, 2009). However, he does not see

spatiality as the primary perpetrator. For him, most problems have a dimension of spatiality, but the root of the inequity lies in the economic, social, or political. In other words, the spatial aspect may compound inequities, but only partially so (Chatterton, 2010; Iveson, 2011; Marcuse, 2009).

Marcuse's seminal work on the topic consists of five key propositions intended to "put space in its place". (Marcuse, 2010). The first proposition describes what Marcuse sees as the main forms of spatial injustice. These are involuntary confinement and unequal allocation of resources across space (Chatterton, 2010; Iveson, 2011; Marcuse, 2010). His second proposition states that spatial injustices are always derivative of broader social injustice. At a local level, Marcuse would state that all social justice has a spatial element but that broader societal, political and economic issues are always at play and not always spatial. Thirdly, all social justice issues have a spatial dimension, and thus space must always be a part of any proposed solution (Marcuse, 2010). Next, the primary point where he and Soja differ, is that spatial solutions are needed but not sufficient to remedy injustices of any kind. Lastly, Marcuse's fifth proposition highlights the importance of historical context. He states that "the role of spatial injustice relative to social injustice is dependent on changing social, political, and economic condition, which have to be empirically specified as they are historically embedded" (Marcuse, 2010, p. 80).

For Soja, the spatial is primary and essential. Soja takes a more radical view of spatial justice, arguing that everything is "always-already spatial" (p. 2). He argues "putting 'spatial' in front of 'justice' is crucial in theory and in practice to emphasize explicitly the spatiality of justice and injustice, not just in the city but at all geographical scales -- from the local to the global" (p. 3). Like Marcuse, he also formulates his argument using several propositions.

Similar to Harvey, Soja's emphasizes three principles of critical spatial thinking. These include "the ontological spatiality of all being", "the social production of spatiality", and the "socio-spatial dialectic" (p.4). Soja views these principles as highlighting the spatial causality of justice and injustice. Soja believes we need to put spatiality at the forefront of our conversations about justice. This emphasis on the spatial is warranted because of the, "causal and explanatory power of the human geographies we produce and within which we live" (p. 29).

Both Soja and Marcuse agree that questions about 'right to the city' can't be answered in the same way across all times and places (Iveson, 2011; Marcuse, 2009; Soja, 2010). Local context is critical. Iveson (2011) sums up the difference between Soja and Marcuse well when he writes "Marcuse offers the right to the city as a useful concept around which different groups might find common cause, and Soja believes it can serve as the 'glue that binds' apparently disparate struggles" (p. 254).

Pulling ideas from both Soja and Marcuse is helpful when attempting to analyze education systems of a particular place. How did the existing geographies of education inequity come to be? Spatial (in)justice can be seen as both an end result and process, as "geographies or distributional patterns that are in themselves just/unjust and as the processes that produce these outcomes" (Chatterton, 2010; p.62 Iveson, 2011). This framework provides the basis for my study. Underlying processes produce unjust geographies. The resulting efforts to remedy them are also inherently spatial. In this study, I look specifically at education inequity. In Charlotte, and elsewhere, both the pattern of education inequity and the approaches to solving it are spatial. I attempt to unpack the specifics of the Charlotte case, contributing empirical evidence to the theory driven debate amongst scholars.

Empirical studies explicitly focused on spatial justice are limited, although there are numerous studies that consider space in the context of social justice. In a special issue of the Journal of Social Sciences focused on spatial inequality, the editors write that there is an "empirical gap in the study of spatial inequality" (Galster and Sharkey, 2017, p.19). Of the empirical studies that have been done, most have been outside the American context. In a study of a small town in The Netherlands, research questions aim to understand how effective local policies are at addressing existing spatial injustices. The author's methods include archival research, qualitative interviews and surveys (Wildschut, 2017). Dabinett (2010) studies the implications of strategic planning policies on spatial justice in South Yorkshire, England. In his study of South Yorkshire, Dabinett finds that the messaging around certain places influence the planning process and result in new meanings of space. Amer (2007) utilized GIS methods to document the spatial pattern of injustice of urban healthcare in Tanzania. Amer's study documented the inability of marginalized communities to access health care services was largely influenced by spatial patterns of inequality.

UCLA's Critical Planning group provides a useful example of how to empirically study spatial justice (2007). Their work categorizes injustices as they are represented in space. These categories include: 1.) spatial claim (ability to live, work, or experience space), 2.) spatial power (opportunities to succeed in and contribute to space), and 3.) spatial link (access to and connection with other spaces) (Bromberg, Gregory, and Morrow; 2007). Rory Kramer's article (2017) focuses on Philadelphia. He analyzes the way that physical attributes of geographic spaces, specifically neighborhood boundaries, reinforce spatial injustice. Kramer uses GIS to observe salient geographic boundaries in Philadelphia that serve as distinct markers, separating communities from each other. A

study of Los Angeles, CA investigates the relationship between spatial justice and the extent to which individuals from different social and economic backgrounds share space when they carry out routine activities such as going shopping or going to work (Browning, Calder, Krivo, Smith, and Boettner, 2017). This analysis provides one method for studying spatial interactions across an entire city, between neighborhoods. The article presents evidence supporting interaction-based mechanisms of neighborhood effects that have been discussed, yet rarely tested empirically (Galster and Sharkey. 2017).

Existing spatial justice literature continually highlights one important point: geographic space is an important component in producing justice relations, yet some of the most interesting and important questions remain unanswered. Empirical studies have documented factors influencing patterns of geographic injustice. However, very few studies have focused on how communities attempt to disrupt patterns of spatial injustice. This study attempts to begin filling this gap by exploring approaches to education systems change with intentional focus on the spatial.

3.2 Approaches to Collective Action for Systems Change

When seeking spatial justice, groups often strategize ways to have influence over how the city is produced. They also aim to negotiate community rights to reduce or eliminate oppression, and/or the domination of one group by another. Following this reasoning, collective action often emerges as the logical solution to shifting power within a neoliberal context. Morange and Fol (2014) argue that the concept of living in a community and also having influence over its direction must, more than ever, remain at the center of debates about how to facilitate more spatial justice. This work analyzes how different groups work towards their idea of a just education system in Charlotte.

Many methods for collective action fall under the umbrella of community organizing. Community organizing is the backstage work needed to build a social movement. Community organizing's democratic and fundamentally sociological impulses bring a sense of reward and satisfaction unmatched by other forms of political practice (Stoecker, 2009). Community organizing isn't about big organizations or leaders, or even about political agendas, it's about activating people to claim power and make change. It's the process by which grassroots organizations form and grow, their members develop leadership skills, and ordinary people learn to change social policy.

Is community organizing the only way to foster change? No. There are many ways to collectively improve challenges in communities. Other approaches to address community problems include service provision and self-help, education and outreach, and advocacy. Table 1 provides an overview of each of these alternative approaches.

Table 1: Comparing approaches to collective action

Leadership / Governance	Tactics and Techniques	Theory of Change / Goals	
Organizations and government agencies	Fundraising and charity	Fill gaps in need	**Service Provision**
Organization or issue group, not necessarily with those directly impacted	Political pressure, public comment, marketing campaigns	Persuade and influence change on behalf of disenfranchised group	**Advocacy**
Government led, or led by key agency	Studies, committees, task forces, public comment	Create formal processes for conflict and change	**Social Planning**
Individual or organization run, not necessarily with those impacted	Information campaigns, door to door, marketing	Inform as many people as possible	**Education + Outreach**
Broad people's organization run by resident leaders	confrontation; direct action and	power; build clout to represent	**Social Action**
Formal organizations, not necessarily with residents	Develop vehicles for informal and formal social control	order/ control; social	**Civic**
Community run organizations; organize power structure as partner	Build relationships and partnerships based on mutual self-interest	Power creation based on mutual interests	**Consensus**
Resident organizations run by a core group of leaders	Popular education, critical thinking, protest, symbolic action	Radically restructure power and institutions	**Transformative**
Highly inclusive, resident-run organizations based on equality	Shared leadership, decision making, and responsibility; mutual support	Link private women/ family and public issues	**Feminist**

Adapted from Ohmer and DeMasi, 2008

Desired Outcomes	Example Organizations and Locations
Provide goods and services to those in need	Second Harvest Food Bank, Charlotte NC
Influence policy change, shift public opinion	Council for Children's Rights, North Carolina
Institutionalize processes, create predictable linear paths to address issues	City of Charlotte Neighborhood and Business Services
Awareness of an issue	CDC Anti-Smoking campaign, nationwide
Alter balance of power; change distribution of resources	ACORN in Chicago, IL
Connect residents with government; undermine patronage system	IAF, Nationwide and International Reach
Leadership and partnerships developed; tangible results	Fostering Community Connections in San Diego, CA
Shift terms of public debate, alter framework of public sphere	Highlander Education and Research Center in New Market, TN
Create family focused, resident-run, community based programs	Templeton Leadership Circle in Portland, OR

Each way of making change has a different relationship with existing power structures. For example, services do not challenge existing systems, but aim to fill gaps.

Figure 2: Continuum of Collective Action

Figure 2 places the approaches to change on a continuum based on the degree to which power is challenged. This study makes the assumption that community organizing is the approach to systems change that will most impact inequities within the local school system. This assumption is made because community organizing (1) builds power within the community (2) lets the community come up with the best solution for themselves, and (3) seeks long-term solutions to the problem. Despite this assumption, prior to this study it was unclear whether community organizing was actually taking place around the topic of education in Charlotte. More importantly, it was also unclear whether any organizing

was having a tangible impact, particularly when compared with other approaches to improving local schools. Before further comparing the merits of community organizing to other methods of solving social challenges, it is important to have a deep understanding of the characteristics and history of organizing.

Defining Community Organizing

In theory, the definition of community organizing is relatively straight forward. Community organizing is a process by which people are brought together to act towards a common goal or agenda (Minieri, Gestos, and Klein; 2007). In the simplest of terms, community organizing is the process of people coming together to address issues that matter to them (Fawcett, 2014). The fundamental purpose of community organization -- to help discover and enable people's shared goals -- is informed by values, knowledge, and experience (Fawcett, 2014). However, the definition of community organizing varies depending on what model of community organizing is being analyzed, and there is no single effective model of community organizing. Despite the differences between models, there is some general consensus about what community organizing is, and what it is not.

All models of community organizing agree that community organizing is deeply entrenched in the search for collective power. Power is the ability to make things happen, and much of community organizing attempts to shift the societal power balance (Beck & Purcell, 2013; Capraro, 2004; Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Miller, 2003; Minieri, Gestos, and Klein; 2007; Pilisuk, et.al 1996; Stoecker, 2009). Community organizing is collaborative, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and leadership is collectively shared (Beck & Purcell, 2013; Drier, 1996; Fisher & Shragge, 2000). Strategy is also an integral part in the community organizing process. Both community organizations and social movement organizations develop tactics and adapt them as needed. Tactical choices are

influenced by the core values and collective identity of the group (McAdam, 1983). These tactical choices ultimately influence the degree to which organizations are empowered or powerless (Capraro, 2004; Minieri & Gestos, 2007). Community organizing is a dynamic process that requires constant attention and effort. It is impossible to maintain momentum if a group is established and upon reaching a certain point, action is stopped (Beckwith & Lopez, 2010).

There is also a degree of consensus about what is not community organizing. Activism isn't organizing, due to the absence of a coherent strategy, coherent target, a process for maintaining a fight over an extended period of time, and an institutional structure for holding people together and mobilizing large numbers (Alinksy, 1989; Fisher & Shragge, 2000). This is not to diminish the impact that activism can have, but it is important to distinguish the difference between the terms. Activists may show up in the interest of justice, but have little interest in the planning that takes place beforehand (Hayes, 2016). Many activities by themselves alone, are not community organizing, such as: mobilizing, legal action, advocacy, service prevision, community governance, movement building, nonpartisan dialogues, and lifestyle changes (Alinksy, 1989).

Community organizing and advocacy vary in a few key ways. Although community organizing, activism, and advocacy are all closely related, they look slightly different in practice. Community organizing is rooted in bottom-up processes. It is community members who prioritize issues, develop solutions, and drive strategy and execution (Foster and Louie, 2010). Most advocacy is fundamentally top-down. Foster and Louie (2010) make the distinction that "advocates speak for others, while organizers inspire community leaders—everyday people—to speak for themselves" (p.23). Community organizing literature often points out a key principle: "Never do for people

what they can do for themselves" (p.19). Organizers and leaders also believe that community members are experts of their own experience. Expertise does not only belong to professionals.

Community organizing can happen in a variety of contexts that define community. Shared place may be the motivating factor among people who share a common geographic space (Fawcett, 2014; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Miller, 2003). This is typically referred to as place based organizing. Shared work experiences or workplace is a less common driver for organization in the 2000s, but is still present in some industries such as farm laborers and union workers (Fawcett, 2014). Shared worldview or experiences can also be unifiers, when people have common struggles or barriers to success (Fawcett, 2014; Miller, 2003). Issue-based organizing can also be effective. This type of organizing is when a group of individuals mobilize around a shared issue, such as immigration or gun control, but are not connected by place. Organizing around education can be viewed as both a place based and issue based topic.

While the definition of community organizing is somewhat apparent, community organizing is often be misunderstood. Community organizing researchers must intentionally ask themselves: "Organizing for whom? "For what purpose?", and "What model is being used here?". Community organizing is a term that has been applied to a variety of strategies and tactics. It is important to understand the context in which modern community organizing was developed and how differences within the field are understood today.

Evolution of Community Organizing

One aspect of community organizing remains largely uncontested: Saul Alinksy is undoubtedly the "father" of modern community organizing in the US. Growing up in the

Chicago slums, Alinksy was immersed in the growing labor movement and saw new potential in unifying people around issues of community concern, rather than solely focusing on shared work grievances (Strom, 2014).

Saul Alinsky developed his style of organizing in the 1930s, influenced by the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the Unemployed Councils of the Communist Party. He saw himself as a non-ideological radical. After building a successful organization in Chicago's Back of the Yards Neighborhood, in 1940 he established the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The goal of the IAF was to raise funds and help create new organizing projects (Reitzes & Reitzes, 1987; Strom, 2014). Alinsky trained community leaders to turn concern over problems into action, to identify and confront relevant government or business figures, and to escalate pressure on these targets as far as necessary to win the issue. Alinsky groups became known for militant, often creative tactics that succeeded in winning better public services or concessions on jobs (Kleidman, 2004; Reitzes & Reitzes, 1987; Strom, 2014). Alinsky developed innovative tactics that the opposition had not yet adapted to, leading to many successive wins (Barkan, 1984).

Between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s organizing grew rapidly, particularly at the community level. It was also a period of grassroots social experimentation. Community organizing was tied to the civil rights, new left, and women's movements of the era (Mizrahi, 2001; Stoecker, 2009; Strom, 2014). As a result, several prominent leaders followed the methods developed by Alinksy (Stoecker, 2009). Rural leaders such as Ella Baker and Myles Horton complimented Saul Alinksy's efforts. In the 1970's, community organizing flourished as Alinksy spread his organizing tactics across the country. In addition to the IAF, Alinksy established groups such as The Association of Communities Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), The Gamaliel Foundation, The

PICO National Network, The Direct Action Research Training Center (DART), The Midwest Academy, & National People's Action (NPA) (Stoecker, 2009; Strom, 2014). This time period is marked as the most successful time for community organizing (Stoecker, 2009).

It is important to note that Alinksy's model of organizing was not without critics. Scholars have pointed out that Alinksy never actually challenged the capitalist system (Horwitt, 1989). While Alinsky did have desires to make capitalism work better, to spread its benefits to a larger group, he did not explicitly question whether or not the basic structure itself was unfair, unjust, or should be replaced (Horwitt, 1989). Additionally, it is now clear that Alinksy held blatantly sexist views. Organizing for him was man's work, in a manly setting (Horwitt, 1989). He dismissed the contributions of women in social movements. He referred to women as "broads" and refused to accept their abilities as organizers (Horwitt, 1989). He was also blind to issues of race, and did not specifically address it in his work.

In the 1970s, community organizing was replaced with a shift to planning and policy. People began to question if community organizing actually worked. By the mid 1980s, community organizing had almost disappeared, or it was submerged within a more administrative planning landscape (Mizrahi, 2001; Stoecker, 2009). Some could argue that Alinsky-style organizations were co-opted. Adversaries had finally adapted their tactics. Organizers were brought to the table in superficial ways only to be "contained" by traditional institutional processes. The Alinsky model suffered during this time. His militant style of organizing was suppressed by the Reagan era of governance. The decline of community organizing was exacerbated by the political agenda that

emerged. The agent of social change shifted from people to corporations and large nonprofits (Fisher and Kling, 1994; Fisher & Shragge, 2000).

The government launched unprecedented attacks on the power of trade unions and the poor in order to minimize social costs and support private corporations in the competitive globalized market (Harrison and Bluestone, 2009). Neoliberal logic allowed governments to reorganize social welfare programs by using community initiatives and nonprofits as flexible and lower cost alternatives to state programs (Mizrahi, 2001; Peterman, 1999; Pilisuk, 1996). In some cases, such as economic development, new formal partnerships were established. Community organizations and other stakeholders were invited into consensus building processes. For example, banks and other businesses became partners, despite formerly being seen as the cause of community problems (Mizrahi, 2001; Peterman, 1996, Stoecker, 2009). Some scholars argue this shift suggests it is difficult to sustain a confrontational movement within the larger political structure over the long term (Mizrahi, 2001; Stern, 2003).

While community organizing dates back to ancient times, Alinksy's model of militant organizing was the major catalyst for community organizing research (Beckwith & Lopez, 1997). While scholars have been interested in the subject since the 1970's, the bulk of community organizing literature has been written post 2000. A noticeable spike in community organizing literature occurred in 2008 with the election of President Barack Obama, a former community organizer (Stoecker, 2009). Republicans used the election to not only attack Obama, but also community organizing in general (Rathke, 2008; Stoecker, 2009). Recently, community organizing has taken a more prominent spot in the urban reform arena, but in a much different context than Alinksy's era of community organizing.

Models of Community Organizing

As stated earlier, there is no one model or list of established best practices for community organizing. While this list is not comprehensive, the most common community organizing models include: 1.) social action model, 2.) civic organizing, 3.) consensus organizing, 4.) transformative models, and 5.) women- centered and feminist models. Faith based organizing is also a common strain of community organizing that can adopt components of several different organizing models. Each model is unique, yet they all share the common goal of shifting power dynamics to improve some established issue.

The social action model, also referred to as the ACORN model, is rooted in conflict organizing. This model assumes the existence of a disadvantaged group that needs to be organized so that they can make demands on larger society (Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008; Miller, 2003; Stern, 2003). ACORN was a collection of community-based organizations in the United States and internationally, that advocated for low- and moderate-income families (www.acorn.org). While the organization has now gone defunct, their style of organizing remains. The goals of social action organizing include making fundamental changes in the community, such as redistributing resources, gaining access to decision making for marginal groups, and changing legislative policies and practices (Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008). Because of these goals, ACORN organizing involves inserting groups directly into the political process; with a type of "in your face" approach (Stern, 2003).

This model of self-interest organizing is characterized by middle class organizers who work for low wages and have high educational skills. ACORN was somewhat paradoxical, as they existed both inside and outside the political system. ACORN organizers influenced elections (and sometimes ran for office), yet they did not constrain

themselves to tactics only approved by the status quo (Beck & Purcell, 2013). ACORN organizers were not organizing organizations; they were organizing people (Miller, 2003). Leadership is held collectively, and is shared among community members. While the focus was on the local, ACORN organizers coordinated local chapters to complement a larger national campaign (Beck & Purcell, 2013). ACORN organizations tended to grow rapidly in size, which left little time to build social capital and trusting relationships (Beck & Purcell, 2013; Mayer, 2003). ACORN organizers were trained to deploy conflict externally and consensus internally. Their model relied on the use of confrontational tactics to sharpen issues, bring media attention, and engage a constituency who thought it impossible to fight big government (Miller, 2003).

The ACORN model has been critiqued by many for its unsustainable use of confrontational conflict. Alinksy is praised for developing a powerful methodology for putting oppressed people into motion. However, the organizations that drive this process are frequently staffed and supported by those with little or no experience of the oppression they are fighting (Sinclair, 2008). Some scholars argue that the ACORN model promotes paternalistic leadership from the outside, rather than training inside agitators (Sinclair, 2008). For example, Sinclair (2008) writes that the Alinksy model underestimates the "hegemonic hold of Euro-capitalist cultural imperialism which defines social ideals according to the interest of the privileged and powerful" (p. 41).

Other scholars argue that while some community organizing models champion self-empowerment, where the poor could take control of their lives and communities through education, hard work, and personal responsibility, ACORN does not. Instead, ACORN uses the poor in a scheme to throw the capitalist political economy into crisis (Stern, 2003).

The civic organizing model, is closely related to the ACORN model, but has diverged slightly over the last few decades after the death of Alinksy. Unlike the social action model, civic organizing is organizers organizing organizations. In this type of model, organizations are invited to join a larger organization of organizations. Churches and trade unions play a major role in this model of community organizing (Beck & Purcell, 2013; Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008). Local issues are used as a means to build the organization outwards. This focus on growth is an explanation for the extensive leadership training these types of groups tend to provide their organizers. Creating a powerful organization that is a vehicle for social control is a main goal. However, these groups often try to stay outside of formal politics and instead focus on finding external allies (Beck & Purcell, 2013; Miller, 2003; Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008). Populist language is often used as a tactic. Populism emphasizes participatory democracy, trusting people to find the right solutions. This model also uses conflict and issue polarization, although less overtly.

Consensus planning encompasses elements of several of the community organizing approaches, but is also different from them in several key ways. Obvious by the name, consensus planning focuses on mutually beneficial agreements on key issues, rather than conflict. Consensus organizers facilitate both bonding and bridging of social capital based on effective partnerships. They see the power structure as a source of potential. Consensus organizers are consistently surveying the landscape for political opportunities rooted in partnership and compromise. Organizers play the role of facilitators, analysts, strategists, brokers and connectors. Consensus planning aims to "knit together the interests of the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the policy maker and the consumer" (Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008). An asset-based approach is

also incorporated in consensus planning. Consensus organizers argue that focusing only on needs and an endless list of problems only results in case-by-case survival and does not help develop a holistic plan forward (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Consensus organizers feel that the method of pairing partnerships and asset based planning brings about the most viable progress and tangible results.

Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is an example of an organization practicing the consensus model. SDI has forged countless partnerships at the local, national, and international scale. SDI (and most consensus based organizations) doesn't address structural issues, because despite its many partnerships, it is still focused on the local scale where it is challenging to confront the structural roots of many problems (Beck & Purcell, 2013). SDI is against the hegemony of the expert, and instead strives for experiential and horizontal learning (Beck & Purcell, 2013). Consensus groups work within the current political system, where as social action groups do so only partially. SDI is a dispersed network of organizations with no overarching body; instead it views itself as a community of practice.

Because of its dispersed nature, consensus planning is often critiqued as not having any clear direction or mission (Beck & Purcell, 2013). Scholars have increasingly critiqued the consensus model's reliance on social capital. As discussed by Mayer, the term 'social capital' itself is somewhat paradoxical, as pairing the social with the idea of 'capital' suggests social relationships provide some type of economic benefit (Mayer, 2003). Critics argue that social capital is only valued because it places the majority of the burden on local groups and communities. Social capital ignores all of the other restructuring processes occurring within neighborhoods (Mayer, 2003). Some scholars contend that social capital suggests that groups and/or neighborhoods must invest their own time and

resources (i.e. generate social capital) before any assistance can be provided (Pilisuk, et.al, 1996). Kretzmann and McKnight state that this approach emphasizes consensus and collaborative strategies, but also de-emphasizes community tensions, and ignores the root causes of many community problems (1993). This type of community organizing does not deal with underlying issues that are caused by polarized interest, "such as banks that redline the community, corporations that abandon it, absentee landlords who run it down, or private/public policy that undermines efforts at almost every turn" (Pilisuk, et.al, 1996, p. 28).

Transformative models of organizing believe that the power structure and system is fundamentally flawed, and they work to radically restructure it (Ohmer and DeMasi, 2008). This model attempts to build collective power while also challenging deeply rooted systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism. This model emerged out of the assertion that Alinksy style organizing did not go far enough to analyze and undermine long-lasting systems of exploitation and oppression (Slayton, 1996). Transformative models facilitate the creation of social capital based on relational ties that are the result of intentional bonding (e.g., among small groups of residents) and bridging (e.g., with groups of activists and organizations outside their area based on a shared ideological vision). A key component of transformative organizing is to unpack the interpersonal and individual effects of oppression and trauma in the lives of individuals. This is seen as a critical part of the process of doing societal, social, community-level change work (Williams, 2015).

Lastly, the feminist model challenges the traditional separation between the private lives of women and families and the public sphere (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). These types of organizations facilitate the bonding of small social networks based on personal

ties and external institutions (Ohmer & DeMasi, 2008). Researchers have agreed that the women's role is often understated because of the assumption that other demands such as family or the home take precedence. Because of this, the role of women in community organizations is severely overlooked, and referred to as "invisible labor" (Stall & Stoecker, 2009). Women have long been active leaders in grassroots collective action. In some movements, the majority of participants have been women, as well as the primary force behind mass mobilization efforts (Erbaugh, 2002). Women have also historically done the bulk of the day-to-day work that sustains an organization. For example, Robnett finds that while women were excluded from leadership roles during the Civil Rights Movement, they were essential organizers in the field who built relationships that became crucial for movement success (1996).

The main difference between the Alinksy model and this model is that feminist organizing often does not culminate into large-scale movements; rather change is enacted at the hyper local scale (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). Women in many neighborhood organizations make up much of the membership, but often do not enjoy the privilege of moving into highly visible leadership roles (Erbaugh, 2002; Robnett, 1996). Emerging feminist organizing has been able to confront this issue, and new projects have emerged explicitly dealing with social problems facing women (Fisher & Shragge, 2000).

The Alinsky model is rooted in the idea of separate public and private spheres (Stall & Stoecker, 1997). Alinksy did not view community organizing as a job for family types, and he argued the main role of the family (namely wives) was to support the organizer's public sphere work. Alinsky was "adamant that real power could not be given, but only taken" (as quoted in Stall & Stoecker, 1997). In an alternative model, women-centered organizing, power begins in the private sphere and is built on a foundation of

relationships. Power is not gained by taking it from elites, but by bringing residents together to resolve disputes and build relationships within their own community (Stall & Stoecker, 1997).

Some view the feminist strain of organizing as a form of mothering, or community caretaking. In the women-centered model, the maintenance and development of personal connections that provide an environment for people to develop, change, and grow is more immediately important than conflict to gain institutional power. "Mothering" the community redefines what it means to be a caretaker, and is often times focused on consensus building. A study conducted by Nancy Naples in the early 1990's found that women contributed vital paid and unpaid services to their communities, and created informal social networks to fight inequality and discrimination (Naples, 1992). In this model, the purpose of organizing is to build relationships, to fill resource gaps by providing vital community services, all with the goal of building local community power to achieve social justice goals.

Professionalization of Community Organizing

Between the 1980's and 2000's, a complex shift in the organizational structure of community groups became clear. Growing professionalization in the field of community organizing called for highly educated organizers working for relatively little pay (Mizrahi, 2001; Pilisuk, et.al, 1996). This demand for heightened qualifications eroded the value of experiential learning and created a demand for a very specific type of community organizer, namely single middle class (often white) men. This change had a trickle-down effect on community organizing: organizations advocated for or represented people rather than organized them. Mobilization declined, and democratic accountability declined as boards of directors replaced membership (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Mizrahi,

2001). The community efforts of the 1980s and 1990s lost edginess and found a new place alongside government and the private sector (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Miller, 2003; Mizrahi, 2001).

In 2008, President Barack Obama brought a lot of spotlight to the field of community organizing. His background as an organizer in Chicago was heavily discussed during the presidential elections. This attention reinvigorated the debate around the professionalization of community organizing. There is a distinction between volunteer community organizers who have other jobs, and those who's main profession is to organize community. While many might assume there is little difference between the two, it is necessary to reflect on the impact of professionalization.

Clément Petitjean (2017) perhaps said it best when she writes, "to rebuild a radical, emancipatory class politics, we have to reckon with professionalization" (p. 2). In a neoliberal society, there is an unquestioned demand for efficiency. Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002) refer to this as the "audit society". In the audit society there is a mandate to only use resources towards predictable, pre-determined outcomes which themselves are measurable (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002). There is little room for negotiation or personal judgment. The audit society requires a kind of "meta-performativity, where standards are met for their own sake, whether they are appropriate and ethical or not" (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002, p. 32).

The culture of the audit society has impacted the field of community organizing. In today's context, it typically takes significant funds to achieve some level of social change. Community groups organized around a particular issue will eventually get to a point where financial support is needed. Typically groups will turn to grant making organizations. Foundations are increasingly demanding some level of certainty when it

comes to giving away money. To mitigate risk, foundations are focusing more and more on "experienced" community organizations with a proven track record of success. Experience is often measured in terms of education or work experience. This creates a demand for academically and professionally trained community organizers. When an organization becomes dependent on grants, especially from a particular funder over and over again, decision-making and strategic processes run the risk of becoming routine and institutionalized for the sake of the grant, rather than the mission at hand.

In addition to the demands of funders, community organizing is rooted in a system that relies on a small group of full-time, highly trained "professional organizers" who can speak the language of the "targets". Alinksy style organizing also focuses on "winnable" campaigns, which has influenced many other styles of community organizing. Success is measured by short term wins. Petitjean (2017) contrasts this to the "slow and respectful" organizing efforts often seen in the South during the Civil Rights Era. For example, organizing was not framed in terms of whether or not the right to vote was "winnable," but that it was just.

Professionalization poses several challenges. Paid organizers have real material interests in the survival of their organizations, and those interests can be at odds with the communities they aim to serve. Additionally, professional community organizers may have a tendency to dismiss non-professional organizers and forms of protest that do not fit within their personal framework or training.

Petijean sees the desire to differentiate between community organizing and activism as a symptom of the professionalization of the field. She compares it to the difference between a professional electrician and a handy man doing electrical work. It is likely they are both capable of doing the job, but a customer feels more at ease with the

"professional". Professional organizers may find a rewarding sense of belonging from being a part of a group of professionals, and thus feel the need to preserve the distinction.

It is hard to generalize about professional community organizers. Much of their impact is the result of organizational culture and personal beliefs. More research is needed to substantiate whether professionalized organizing does indeed get bogged down in a narrow view of social change. Petijean argues that informal organizers are better able to adapt to shifts in politics and power relations because they are not beholden to an organization for their job. In the South, there is a trend towards professionalization, however informal organizing networks are more common here than any other region (Price and Diehl, 2004).

Southern Community Organizing

The South provides both unique challenges and opportunities for community organizing. While organizing in the region shares many traits of organizing from other parts of the country, it is undeniable that things are just a little different in the South. The notion of respect, especially to and for elders, deeply influences behaviors and social relations, especially in small towns and rural areas (Price and Diehl, 2004). While respect should be a given no matter where organizing is taking place, respect has significant consequences for organizing styles and tactics in the South. Though the more adversarial and confrontational tactics central to some organizing styles may appeal to young people seeking to confront oppression, these tactics often narrow paths to success in the South, limiting the ability to instill long-term change.

Price and Diehl (2004) write that "Outsiders lack a real understanding of how you win friends and influence people in the South" (p.2). Furthermore, they suggest the community's comfort level with confrontational direct actions tends to be much less than

in other parts of the country. Because of this, community-minded leadership, solid networks, and organizational infrastructures that rest on a foundation of intergenerational strength are perhaps even more important in the South than in any other part of the US.

Given a legacy of oppression, divestment, disenfranchisement, and isolation, poor people and people of color in the South are still fighting for basic freedoms and essentials. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, Southern organizers are positioned to lead and inspire organizing movements across the country. Southern organizers understand how to operate in an environment where "Money for their work can be scarce, but where reciprocal communal support has sustained their communities for centuries. They also understand how to move safely and strategically in a region where the threat of economic, social and even physical retribution is still real" (Price and Diehl, 2004, p.4). In short, Southern organizers are able to get things done in particularly oppressive environments.

Organizers in the South face a variety of challenges. Groups in the region are often dismissed by national progressive circles in major cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York City. Several studies done by Grantmakers for Southern Progress suggest that much of the nation views the South as a lost cause when it comes to social justice organizing (Schlegel and Peng, 2018). They document the functional de-prioritization and under-investment in Southern social justice infrastructure at the national level. Grantmakers for Southern Progress exists after research findings found that the South, especially the Deep South, receive pennies to the dollar in charitable contributions for organizing and social justice efforts when compared to funding in other parts of the country.

This lack of support is also tied to the increased professionalization of community organizing previously discussed. Southern leaders have a tendency to be disregarded

because many of the most impactful organizers lack the educational credentials or formal capacity that grantmakers expect from experienced nonprofit leaders (Price and Diehl, 2004; Schlegel and Peng, 2018). Foundations and donors often only work with established political, business or social sector leaders. This is especially problematic in the South, where many active community organizing takes place within informal networks at the ground level. This dynamic has created an environment where many community organizations have developed a distrust of major funders, and have effectively written off philanthropy. While many may assume organizing in the South is less prevalent or active, it is more likely that it is just underfunded and less visible.

Faith Based Community Organizing

Given the influence of religion in the South it is important to dive into the main components of faith based community organizing (FBCO). FBCO is also referred to as "broad-based," "church-based," or "congregation-based" community organizing (Wood and Warren, 2002). FBCO refers to a model of organizing that engages people primarily through their congregation or religious affiliation and trains or mobilizes them for leadership on behalf of their communities (Wood, 2003). In many cases, faith based organizers will partner with outside non-faith based institutions to collaborate on shared agendas. Many faith based groups focus on a broad range of issues, primarily oriented around improving the quality of life for low-income families.

Because there are a multitude of denominations and faiths, FBCO can look very different depending on the context. Warren and Wood (2001) argue that FBCO represents the most widespread movement for social justice in America. In their 2001 study, Wood and Warren state that FBCO directly touches the lives of more than two million members of religious congregations in all the major urban areas and many

secondary cities around the US. A growing number of case studies about FBCO networks and organizations argue that these groups are an essential component of the revitalization of American life (Wood, 2003; Wood and Warren, 2002; Wuthnow, 2009). Thousands of congregations across the country have mobilized masses of people to participate in collaborative efforts to improve schools, promote economic development, fight crime, and build affordable housing (Wood, 2002). In Charlotte, faith based groups are growing increasingly important in discussions around education, affordable housing, and economic mobility. For example, Convenant Presbyterian Church invested 2 milliion dollars into an affordable housing development in 2017 (Portillo, 2017). Faith based groups continually serve as important gap fillers in both urban and rural communities (Hackworth, 2010). Furthermore, FBCO groups nurture political participation and leadership amongst those marginalized from democratic systems (Hart, 2001; Warren, 2001).

Warren and Wood (2001) surveyed congregations engaged in FBCO and found that approximately 38% of the congregations engaged in FBCO are white, 33% are African American, and 20% are Latino. They also found that FBCO is "primarily based in Roman Catholic, liberal and moderate Protestant, and African American religious traditions, with some representation from other faiths" (Warren and Wood, 2001).

It is important to note that there are very few traditionalist or conservative Protestant congregations (including Southern Baptists) engaged in FBCO. This is a key finding, as these groups make up nearly a third of religious congregations in the United States today, and are particularly concentrated in the South (Warren and Wood, 2001). Congregations from outside the "broad Judeo-Christian tradition", including Mormon,

Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu congregations, are present within faith-based organizing, but make up a very small portion (Warren and Wood, 2001).

Warren and Wood (2001) suggest several factors for these FBCO patterns. First, they argue that Christian denominations are most likely to have congregations located in core urban areas, which have faced serious socio-economic challenges in recent years, and are thus naturally the ground zero of FBCO. Secondly, the Catholic Church has made funding for faith-based organizing a top priority for over 25 years, with large Protestant and Jewish funding agencies following suit (Warren and Wood, 2001). Third, the African American, liberal and moderate Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths have included socio-economic concerns within their core teachings for many years, which has nurtured a concern for social justice issues.

The relative absence of traditionalist Protestant groups from the FBCO landscape is suggested to be a result of "their stronger emphasis on issues of personal morality and their discomfort within the cultural milieu of faith-based organizing" (Warren and Wood, 2001, p. 31). Additionally, groups such as suburban Southern Baptists and traditionalist Protestant congregations tend to be made up of more affluent members. Understanding how active faith groups are in conversations around education equity is important to this work.

Empirical Community Organizing Studies

Research on community organizing processes and outcomes cuts across several disciplines, including sociology, psychology, urban studies/affairs, social work, education, and political science (Christens and Speers, 2015). Empirical work on community organizing has primarily focused on building community capacity and achieving changes in local policies. It has also been studied in the context of human development,

psychological empowerment, education, and democratic participation (Boyte, 2010; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Speer et al., 1995; Stoecker, 2009). Much of the empirical research has used participatory and community-based approaches (Speer & Christens, 2013; Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012).

Using qualitative interviews and archival methods, previous studies have described community organizing models "on the ground", in practice (Christens, Collura, Kopish and Varvodic, 2014; Conner, Zaino, and Scarola, 2013; Fisher, Brooks, and Russell 2007). Case study methods have also been employed to describe how particular organizing models play out in specific locations (Speer and Christens, 2013; Speer et al., 2003). For example, a 2012 study by Speer and Christens presents details of a local group of citizens organizing to hold governmental and nongovernmental organizations accountable for improving housing and communities in Kansas City, MO. Their use of case study methodology attempts to understand community phenomena within a given place in a more holistic way.

Strategies for recruitment, issue selection, leadership determination, and action were compared across models in a study by Collura and Christens (2014). Analyses revealed that some models might be better suited to action on certain issues. Collura and Christens urge researchers to pay close attention to contextual factors when determining strategies for creating systems change (2014). Several studies also examine relational ties that promote social power (Christens, Inzeo, and Faust, 2014; Hughey and Speer, 2002).

This study attempts to fill a gap in both empirical and theoretical spaces within community organizing and spatial justice literature. Prior empirical studies have focused largely on the social dynamics that yield community organizing activity, shape organizing tactics, and influence outcomes. Studies have not yet provided a solid method for

analyzing community organizing networks, activities, and outcomes in comparison with other approaches, while maintaining a focus on spatiality. Additionally, spatial justice work has not yet explored the bidirectional relationship between space and community organizing. This research develops a method for analyzing community organizing as part of a larger system through a spatial lens.

Organizing Spaces

Few would deny that the black church was critical to the Civil Rights Movement. The Southern black church, removed from white control and central to the life of black communities, provided meeting places to develop strategy and commitment, and build a network of charismatic movement leaders (Polletta, 1999). It provided a relatively safe place for organizers to meet, plan and gather resources. These kinds of places have been shown to be an essential part of fostering community organizing. This research identifies these kinds of places in Charlotte, to document where they are, who uses them, and how they support and influence approaches to equity in education.

These spaces have been increasingly discussed in the literature. Researchers have documented them under many names. Polletta (1999) outlines the ways these spaces have been described. Authors have referred to them as free spaces, subcultures, communities, institutions, organizations, associations, physical spaces, and safe spaces. Despite the variation in name, these spaces are generally defined as "environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue" (Polletta, 1999, p. 103). These spaces are settings between individual private lives and large scale institutions where ordinary people can collaborate "with dignity, independence and vision" (Polletta, 1999, p. 105).

Specific examples of these spaces include block clubs, tenant associations, bars, union halls, student lounges and hangouts, family households, and recreational groups.

While most scholars agree about the importance of these organizing spaces, there is some disagreement as to what actually constitutes an organizing space. Some authors feel that these spaces are physical spaces where people meet in person (Lacey, 2005; Polletta, 1999). Others argue that more abstract concepts can be considered free spaces. For example, Scott suggests that linguistic codes, those that are not visible to those in power, "are as much a free space as is a physical site of resistance" (Scott, 1990, p. 19). Others see free spaces "in print and performance" (Farrell, 2013; Polletta, 1999). With the continued evolution of technology, the Internet and social media can also be homes for organizing spaces. Luger (2016) writes that "the contextual differences, spatial/legal limits and restrictions, varying degrees of censorship, physical scale and even factors such as climate, between these urban places" must be considered when determining what is or is not an organizing space (p 83).

There is some agreement on other aspects of organizing spaces. Discussions of these spaces have commonly suggested that a defining feature is the political, social, and economic isolation from dominant institutions (Polletta, 1999). Additionally, strongly integrated networks typically means that entry into these spaces is reliant on pre-existing relationships. Web-based organizing spaces aside, small size, intimacy, and community rootedness are typical markers (Evans and Boyte, 1992; Polletta, 1999). Taking a look at community organizing around education in Charlotte will require an understanding of organizing spaces, both physical and abstract.

Collective action, and community organizing specifically, are both strategies for creating more spatial justice. They are also processes that are influenced by existing

patterns of spatial injustice. Local context often produces a unique landscape of injustice within a city. To understand the culture and impact of collective action in Charlotte, it is important to understand the Southern region and its historical evolution overtime. A discussion of the "New South" and factors unique to Charlotte is provided in the following section.

3.3 The New South

Charlotte has fully embraced the "New South" image, but what exactly does that mean? In an article for the Charlotte Observer, Emily Zimmerman, former president of Levine Museum of the New South, explains her take on the meaning behind the New South. She states that, "The New South is a time: from the end of the Civil War until the present. The New South is [also] a place: the Southeastern U.S. And the New South is an idea: one of continual reinvention" (Schindler, 2017, p. 2). It is clear that today, the term has become a multilayered idea loaded with meaning. How has the idea of the "New South" evolved since the original proliferation of the term? A newspaper editor from Atlanta, GA, Henry W. Grady, first used the phrase "New South" in 1874 (Gaston, 2002). In Grady's context, the term was tied to a shift in the economic base of the South. He urged the South to shift its focus from a predominantly agrarian economy to a modern economy oriented around factories, mines, and mills (Gaston, 2002; Vann Woodward, 1951). Those in favor of the New South vision "envisioned a post-reconstruction southern economy, modeled after the North's embrace of the Industrial Revolution" (Recchiuti, 2017, p.4).

Regionally, the economic remake did not have a whirlwind effect. For example, as of 1900, per-capita income in the South was forty percent less than the national average,

and rural poverty persisted across much of the South (Gaston, 2002; Vann Woodward, 1951). This is partially due to the fact that sharecropping and tenant farming picked up where slavery left off (Gaston, 2002). The profitability of cotton and other crops remained low, and sharecroppers and tenant farmers often fell into a cycle of indebtedness (Gaston, 2002; Vann Woodward, 1951). After farmers sold all their crops, they found themselves short of funds to "pay back the loans they had taken out for seed, tools, farm equipment, and living expenses, leaving them owing more after a year of labor than they had when they started" (Stanley, 1998, p.12). This system left tenant farmers, especially black farmers, living in extreme poverty. It seemed as though everyone was struggling to get by, and as a result the southern economy stagnated.

However, there are a few particular places where this New South vision did begin to take shape. Several "success stories" emerged out of North Carolina. The American Tobacco Company was founded in 1890 by James Duke to great success (Gaston, 2002). Textile mills were perhaps the most notable New South initiative. Gaston describes how "Northern capitalists invested in building textile mills in the southern Appalachian foothills of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, drawn to the region by the fact that they could pay southern mill workers half the rate of workers in northern mills" (Gaston, 2002, p. 16). As a result of these low wages, the mills gave only a modest boost to the southern economies. However, even this small boost was noticeable when comparing these places to other states in the South.

Today, the textile mills are being repurposed for modern needs (Graves and Smith, 2010). Luxury lofts and work spaces now fill many of the old mills in Charlotte. The economic base in the city has shifted yet again. Gone are the days of textiles, as

banking and finance have expanded into major local industries with ties to global markets (Graves and Smith, 2010).

The people have changed, too. The predominately black and white city has evolved into a diverse city, seeing large influxes of immigrants. In particular, Spanish speaking populations have increased, with Charlotte now being considered an "immigrant gateway" (Graves and Smith, 2010). Yet still, Charlotte struggles to be taken seriously as a "global city". However, Graves and Smith (2010) argue that it is well on its way, as the city continues to globalize. They write that,

> Expanding connectivity with global economic markets; a rapidly growing foreign-born and increasingly transnational population; broadening social and cultural diversity; a widening gap between the city's disenfranchised poor and its globally networked elite; fixed capital investment in the form of corporate headquarters, production facilities, condominium skyscrapers, and multinational hotel towers; major public transit and infrastructure development; the centralization and construction of cultural and sporting venues; and gentrification in the historic core and streetcar suburbs are features shared by Charlotte and other globalizing cities" (p.2).

The city is globalizing in a way that is uniquely Southern. Perhaps, even newly New South. In some ways, Charlotte has reframed the New South ideal to mean there is, and always has been, equality and peace throughout the city. Graves and Smith (2010) point out that in reality the city "pretty much wrote off at least one-quarter of its population with inferior schools, slipshod urban services, and a benign indifference that

passed for good race relations" (p.13). Charlotte wanted to believe that the city was insulated from the worst of Jim Crow. While other places experienced extreme volatility and violence during the struggle for civil rights, Charlotte embraced a "lunching rather than lynching" approach to race relations (Graves and Smith, 2010, p. 15). These points are important to consider when unpacking the education policy decisions that have unfolded in Charlotte.

There are also questions about whether Charlotte is actually Southern at all. While the historical context of the city is inextricably linked to the Southern landscape, some still argue that Charlotte has lost its Southern charm (Graves and Smith, 2010). This feeling is the result of intentional decision making by city leaders in the mid 1990s. Graves and Smith (2010) describe how Charlotte business leaders and politicians intentionally devised a public relations strategy that bolstered economic growth and harmony in order to "overcome a regional inferiority complex based on persistent national stereotypes about southern racial and economic backwardness" (p.24). Negative Southern stereotypes were incompatible with the growth ambitions of city leaders. By the 1980s and 1990s, Charlotte appeared to have left conventional images of the South completely behind. What took hold was a 'bland bankers paradise' with "no unique character, no true soul, no sense of place at all" (Graves and Smith, 2010, p.27). What is perceived as a "healthy balance between time-honored traditionalism and modern progressivism" has come to be known as the "Charlotte Way" (Graves and Smith, 2010). The "Charlotte Way" is a phrase heard many times during the data collection process for this study. It is clearly a phrase that resonates with many Charlotteans.

3.4 Neoliberalism and Southern Progressivism

In the following section I discuss neoliberalism and the closely related Progressive Era in the United States. I specifically focus on the unique flavor of progressivism in the South. Neoliberal policies are virtually inescapable in today's society. It is important to discuss neoliberalism and its resulting impacts on community organizing and other aspects of everyday life. In fact, Pinaud (2015) argues that neoliberalism is not just the disengagement of government from public services, but is the "mobilization of the state in a plan for the generalization of market mechanisms" (p.22). A process which facilitates spatial justice, such as community organizing, has the potential to "shake up the neo-liberal city" (Pinaud, 2015, p.10). Neoliberal processes that guide the production of space, and access to that space, often results in spatial injustices.

Neoliberalism Defined

The concept of neoliberalism is often discussed as some mysterious, untraceable force that is hardwired into society's DNA. Author George Monbiot (2016) writes, "So pervasive has neoliberalism become that we seldom even recognize it as an ideology. We appear to accept the proposition that this utopian, millenarian faith describes a neutral force; a kind of biological law, like Darwin's theory of evolution" (p.4). However, some authors argue that allowing the idea of neoliberalism to become an amorphous, intangible idea is not only dangerous, but inaccurate (MacLean, 2008; Springer, 2008; Thorsen, 2010). The ideology arose intentionally, as a "conscious attempt to reshape human life and shift the locus of power" (MacLean, 2008; Monbiot, 2016). To begin to unpack the influence of neoliberalism on modern community organizing, particularly in the South (and the "New South"), it is important to first define this nebulous concept.

Neoliberalism is defined by a few key principles. These include deregulation, privatization, low or no corporate taxes, and tax cuts for the wealthy (Hohle, 2012). Additionally, welfare programs are re-framed as entitlement programs that are wasteful and inefficient because they "promote laziness and incentives to not work" (Hohle, 2012, p.7). Deregulation removes many of the state-mandated rules and guidelines over industry, despite environmental consequences or economic inequities. Shifts from public goods and services to privatization are rationalized by calls for efficiency and profit. Public services are narrowed to focus on systems that support economic growth or physical security and safety (Goode, 2006; Hohle, 2012).

At its core, neoliberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human interaction (Metcalf, 2017). Citizens become consumers, valued for their buying and selling power. Inefficiency, in all forms, is punished (Metcalf, 2017). Unfortunately, neoliberalism and the free market tend to produce a tiny batch of winners and an enormous group of losers (Lazzarato, 2009; Metcalf, 2017). Over the course of many years, neoliberalism has come to regulate almost every aspect of life (Monbiot, 2017).

The Neoliberal City

Neoliberalism has had an impact in every community. However, neoliberal effects are especially felt in the city. The neoliberal city is a place that is increasingly defined by elites through and by consumption (Miles, 2012). Cities have become defined by disparities of wealth (Miles, 2012). For Harvey (1989) there are three main characteristics of the neoliberal city: (1) an emphasis on public–private partnerships in which a key priority is to develop structures that attract external sources of funding and that therefore include a key role for local boosterism; (2) a tendency towards speculation, in an environment that would previously have been rationally planned; and (3) an emphasis on

the construction of place rather than the construction of territory. Essentially, it is hoped that the image and "feel" of a place will have a trickle-down effect on the city as a whole. This is given primacy over tangible improvements in specific, targeted places across the city, such as improving schools or building quality affordable housing (Miles, 2012). Urban governance becomes focused on the enhancement of the city's image. Improvements are symbolic in nature, in which marginalized groups have no voice (Harvey, 1989; Miles, 2012). This point is especially reminiscent of Charlotte's use of a public relations firm following the unrest from the Keith Lamont Scott shooting. A similar process occurred when the CMS superintendent suddenly resigned. Viewing the situation through the lens of the neoliberal city puts a spotlight on unanswered questions. Did the Scott shooting impact the city's image? Is damage control in place for this reason, or for the well-being of city residents? In the neoliberal city, 'urban glamour zones' are often the brutal product of discriminating urban systems (MacLeod, 2002). Miles (2012) writes that, "the above characteristics are underpinned by a desire on the part of neoliberal elites to commodify the city"(p.37).

Doreen Massey (2007) argues that globalization has created a situation in which the city has become defined by elites, where "cities of the many are claimed by the few" (p.10) . Brenner and Theodore (2002) claim that the main goal of neoliberal urban policy is to reinvent the city for consumption. As a result, more and more city centers have evolved into 'corporate landscapes of leisure or bastions of particular cultural forms, such as art galleries and marinas, from which marginal groups are displaced" (Hubbard, 2004; Miles, 2012). Exclusionary urban policies have repeatedly been interpreted as 'urban revanchism'. Revanchinist strategies reinforce the neoliberal city and are devised to

attract gentrifiers and tourists at the expense of marginal and minority groups (Van Eijk, 2010).

Southern Origins of Neoliberalism

While the term "neoliberalism" itself only dates back to the 1930s, the underpinnings of the concept are not new (Harvey, 2007; Metcalf, 2017; Monbiot, 2017). Author Nancy MacLean (2007) suggests that nineteenth-century Southern planters were America's original neoliberals. She argues that while neoliberalism of today may be more accepting of "equal opportunity for all" on paper, at the end of the day, fair treatment of workers or respectful human rights are still as irrelevant as they were in the antebellum south. Furthermore, MacLean claims that neoliberalism upholds a very particular interpretation of freedom. An interpretation that is borrowed from nineteenth-century slavery defenders (MacLean, 2007). Proponents of slavery were endlessly devoted to private property rights, disliked strong federal regulation for anything other than military purposes, supported a punitive style of governance as the key to social order, and displayed an enthusiasm for trade, both domestic and international (MacLean, 2007). These ideals sound remarkably similar to the prevailing principles under the current paradigm of neoliberalism today.

The South's upper-class whites, both before and after the Civil War, argued for low labor costs, slim welfare programs, and open foreign markets in which to keep the flow of capital steady (Hohle, 2012; MacLean, 2007). The affluent, white Southern leaders strongly rejected the labor protections, quality public education, infrastructure investments, rehabilitative justice, and active federal government some Northerners sought (MacLean, 2007). MacLean puts it best when she writes, "No better tutors could be found than conservative southern elites for what David Harvey depicts as the core

project of neoliberalism: the reassertion of class power in its rawest form so as to reduce everything to a commodity, especially labor, in the quest to free capital of social obligation and political constraint" (Harvey, 2007; MacLean, 2007, p.5).

Hohle (2012) goes a step further, arguing that if we are not intentional about discussing the economic origins of neoliberalism in the South, we are bound to overlook the influence of race. We must pay closer attention to the "color of neoliberalism" (Hohle, 2012). While Hohle also views neoliberalism as having southern origins, he views it more as a tool to maintain school segregation after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling. Hohle describes a process during which white elites intentionally shaped discourse around the ideas of "public" and "private". He writes that "Since the federal government was already the enemy [following the Brown v. Board of Education ruling], it was easy to use a discourse of privatization to attach ideas of federal, public, and black into a single discursive category" (p.147). How these sentiments play into discussions around education today is a point of interest. During this time, most federal policies were considered an attack on the white southern way of life (Hohle, 2012; MacLean, 2007). This pattern first emerged in the South, and slowly spread to the North, where over time working- and middle-class whites were drawn to an economic and political ideal that eventually matured into our understanding of neoliberalism (Hohle, 2012).

Ultimately, the racial meaning of neoliberalism became inextricably linked with the idea of privatization, wherein the language of privatization created an association of black with public, and then attached the "black+public" concept with government regulation. It is partially through this process that the Democratic Party essentially becomes understood as the party of struggle, evidenced by its support of public services and goods. These services then became coded language to mean a backing of African

Americans, women, and the poor. The other side of this suggests that "private" is linked with "white", and ultimately superior. When we pay attention to the spatial sources of neoliberalism, we begin to contextualize the political, economic, and social nuances of southern life. The evolution of this coded language has also seeped into how we talk about schools, quality education, and equity.

The South is incredibly important in a discussion of neoliberalism. The vice versa is also true. Neoliberalism is also important to a discussion of the South. It should not be misconstrued that racism is purely a southern export. MacLean quotes Malcolm X (1966) as saying "America is Mississippi", challenging the liberal portrayal of the South as an anomaly. "There's no such thing as the South–it's America. If one room in your house is dirty, you've got a dirty house… And the mistake that you and I make is letting these Northern crackers shift the weight to the Southern crackers" (X,1966 as quoted in MacLean, 2007, p.6). While racial atrocities and neoliberal origins may have been concentrated in the South, MacLean points to "northern complicity in southern practices" (MacLean, 2007; Hirsch, 1983; Sugrue, 2014). It is important to recognize the racial forces underpinning neoliberalism, it's national (and now global) reach, as well as its regional origins.

Southern Progressivism

During the same period when neoliberalism was beginning to bubble up in the South, the Progressive Era swept the nation. Sandwiched between the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties, the Progressive Era spanned from the 1890s to 1920s as an attempt to remedy the social ills of an industrializing and urbanizing country. This era was a period of widespread social activism and political reform (Chambers, 2000). On the

surface, the era was working towards the betterment of society and improved quality of life.

However, the Progressive Era looked slightly different in the South. There were many admirable issues targeted in the South during this time, including major areas of economic, social, and moral reform among southern states. Issues such as "prohibition, the regulation of child labor, campaigns to abolish the convict lease system and reform the penal system, and expansion of educational opportunities and social services for marginalized groups" were addressed (Zainaldin and Inscoe, 2015, p.17). While "social services for marginalized groups" sounds like a step in the right direction, it was coded language for "separate but equal" standards and other racialized policies. Many of the steps that were taken towards racial equality during the Reconstruction period were reversed. The question became 'reforms for who'? While the era marked progress in some ways, the disfranchisement of black voters was also considered "progress" by white progressives in southern states who felt that it eliminated a major source of electoral corruption. Jim Crow laws imposed at the same time were also viewed as "progressive". Clearly, enhanced quality of life was only to be experienced by certain groups. In the South the poorest and most marginalized members of society were especially rejected and neglected, even more so than in other parts of the country. This included both African Americans and women. While the suffrage movement picked up steam in other regions, the South stalled.

It is not difficult to see how neoliberalism and the southern Progressive Era complement one another. During the Progressive era there was a desire to strive for "moral righteousness" and "conformity" (Tindall, 1967; Lerda, 2000). In the South, original goals evolved from a focus on improved quality of life to efficiency and

development. Tindall (1967) refers to this as "business progressivism", a sort of battle cry for efficiency that stressed “better roads, better schools, and better public services”, but for "middle-class whites only” (Kousser, 1980 as quoted in Lerda, 2000). In fact, Lerda (2000) suggests that North Carolina was on the forefront of the trend towards business progressivism. The trend caught on in the South as a means to help the region enter the American economic mainstream. It is here that Lerda suggests those calling for a “New South” began to spread the idea of the "industrial utopia”. She argues the Southern Progressive Era effectively “marked a transition from the missionary era to one of institutionalization and professionalism” (Lerda, 2000, p.74).

While the era had lasting impacts that can still be felt today, the progressive wave of change and transformation did not alter the basic structures that make Southern culture "Southern". Lerda (2000) writes that evangelicalism, fundamentalism, and religion remained a “civic code of life”. Others write of a “cultural religion” that aimed to “preserve moral values, purify social institutions, and protect men and women from their own weaknesses” (Grantham, 1981, p.71). Southern churches were active agents of change, and religion became very much part of the process of reform. During the Progressive Era, religious institutions played an important role in preserving “rural values deeply rooted in Southern culture and traditions: morality, benevolence, and efficiency all were advocated as indispensable tools for the betterment of Southern society” (Lerda, 2000).

3.5 The Role of Faith in the South

While the South has changed in many ways, religion continues to influence the region. Any study of the South without some discussion of the role of religion would be

remiss. It is also important to understand how religion has influenced conversations around justice if we are to understand community organizing and other approaches to change in Charlotte. Religion is inextricably linked to daily life in the US South, whether a person is religious or not. As described by Wilson (2004), it does not matter whether a southerner is necessarily a believer themselves, it is a tangible, if not unavoidable, part of the landscape. Compared with other parts of the country, several studies discuss the degree to which southerners are passionate and vocal about their faith (Boles, 1995; Goen, 1983; Wilson, 2004).

Building on Grantham's concept of "cultural religion", Historian John Lee Eighmy also discusses the idea of "cultural captivity" to suggest that church life and southern culture are nearly one in the same (Eighmy, 1972; Wilson, 2004). The church and the South have a bidirectional relationship. While the church is shaped by economic and racial structures, the church also shapes institutional and personal development of the South and its people (Wilson, 2004). Not only did the church play a significant role during the Progressive Era, religious beliefs were also used as justification for progressive policies and programs. Wilson discusses the paradoxical nature of religion in the South. Where it was used to advance the cause of slavery, it also inspired slave rebellion. Throughout the evolution of the South, religious organizations have remained as anchor institutions of southern life.

The popular saying that "the county is no more segregated than it is on Sunday mornings" suggests that not all churches in the South look the same. Given the racialized history of the South in particular, it is not surprising that different groups have unique relationships with religion. The connection between the black community and the black

church is particularly unique. Black churches have long been seen as safe havens from a society of oppression.

Religion in Charlotte, NC

According to a recent profile on religion in the region, a majority of Charlotteans are religiously affiliated (54.1%) (Funk, 2015). This is slightly higher than the state average (48%). Table 2 provides a breakdown of religions in Charlotte, as compared with the state and the US. In the South, the number of those who considered themselves religiously unaffiliated is on the rise (Funk, 2015). In North Carolina, those reporting no religious affiliation jumped from 12 percent in 2007 to 20 percent in 2015 (Funk, 2015). It is important to note however, that southerners remain more inclined than anywhere else in the US to affiliate with religious institutions (Funk, 2015). Perhaps unique to Charlotte, Graves and Smith (2010) argue that while religion is important here, there is an unwritten rule that "it must not intrude on the city's major task of making money" (p.19).

Religion across southern states, notably North Carolina, is changing. One factor is the migration of people to the area from other parts of the country where religion may be less talked about or practiced (Funk, 2015). This is particularly relevant to Charlotte, one of the fastest growing cities in the state, where approximately 100 people move to the city per day (Portillo, 2018).

Table 1: Religion in Charlotte (Best Places, 2017).

Religion in Charlotte, NC			
	Charlotte	**North Carolina**	**United States**
% Religious	54.1%	48.9%	49.4%
% Baptist	13.4%	18.3%	8.2%
% Catholic	9.8%	19.7%	19.7%
% Other	9.5%	8.1%	6.7%
% Methodist	8.4%	9%	4%
% Presbyterian	5.5%	2.8%	1.7%
% Pentecostal	2.6%	2.7%	1.9%
% Lutheran	1.4%	1.1%	2.4%
% Episcopalian	1.2%	.9%	.6%
% Latter Day Saints	.9%	.8%	2.1%
% Jewish	.6%	.2%	.7%
% Eastern Faith	.4%	.3%	.5%
% Islam	.3%	.3%	.9%

The Black Church

African Americans are some of the most religious people in the world (Gallup and Castelli 1989; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). This intense connection to religion refers to the "great importance of God and religion in African Americans' lives, the high frequency of church attendance and church membership, and the prevalence of prayer in daily life" (Gallup 1996; Patillo-McCoy, 1998; Ploch and Hastings 1994). It is quite astonishing to consider that at one point, even among African Americans who have no religious

affiliation and have not attended church since age 18, 40 percent reported praying every day (Patillo-McCoy, 1998; Taylor and Chatters, 1988).

This deep connection to religion stems from the historic suffering of black people. He writes that "religion comforts and sustains suffering people, and a South [with a history] of slavery, Civil War, poverty, racial discrimination, economic exploitation, ill health, and illiteracy surely needed that crucial comfort" (Wilson, 2004, p.26).

The black church is often considered a major driver in the mobilization of the black community. During the era of slavery, the black church was seen as the "invisible institution", one of the few places of solace for black slaves (Raboteau, 2004). Much of the planning that supported the Civil Rights Movement took place in black churches (Calhoun-Brown, 2000). Mass meetings and rallies in support of the movement were held at large African American churches. While they provided a safe haven for black people, they were also targets for bombings and fires. Regardless of the risks, the church remained a pillar of hope and stability. Black churches provided tangible, moral and spiritual support (Marsh, 2008). Offerings of money were taken up to provide financial support to those participating on the front lines (Marsh, 2008). The church also groomed and nurtured several generations of black leaders.

It has been noted that church based outreach in the 1950's and 1960's directly focused on social action and protest, while contemporary outreach tends to take the form of charity driven social programs such as food and clothing programs, family-support, and child care (Barnes, 2004). Despite this, the black church has largely been deemed a key advocate for justice efforts and a catalyst for positive social change. However, some scholars argue this is not the case. Brown and Brown suggest that simply attending church does not provide enough social capital and/or resources to propel African Americans into

social justice related activities (Brown and Brown, 2003). Instead, civic involvement in the church community is key, where "members are exposed to political discussions and are encouraged to be activists", indirectly leading to black activism (Brown and Brown, 2003, p.9). Involvement in church committee life is important to black civic skill development (such as communication, writing, and organizing skills), which increases these church activists' competence and confidence to participate in justice causes outside the church walls (Brown and Brown, 2003). Reed claims that the assumed relationship between the black church and political participation is a myth (Reed, 1986). Instead he and others argue that the hierarchal nature of many black churches, and other factors lead the church to encourage "political quietism" among African Americans, suppressing mass activism (Reed, 1986).

Feminist scholars argue that black churches can not have a meaningful impact on justice until issues of gender are addressed within the black church. The inequality of black women within black churches is pervasive (Green, 2003). The contributions of black males in the church are focused on, while the role of black women has often been ignored. This persists despite the fact that "The principal programs of the black church rely disproportionately on women for their support and success, and all of the traditional black religious denominations tend to have basically female congregations" (Green, 2003, p.18). For the most part, Black male ministers have been silent on the role of women in the church.

Some take a midline argument, that the church once inspired mobilization and organizing in the black community, but the role of the church has since evolved (Cadet, 2013). Cadet (2013) writes that the role of the black church in organizing is the result of a false assumption largely based on the glamorization of the Civil Rights Movement.

Instead, she argues that many churches, black churches in particular, have social justice sympathies but do not work to explicitly include it as part of their mission (Cadet, 2013). Cadet quotes one of her interviewees as saying "I think one thing that affects the black church today is the mythology of the black church's involvement of yesterday" (p.19). It is likely that the true answer to the question of how much the black church facilitates justice organizing is highly context specific.

Barnes (2004) begins to untangle the complexities of the black church by dismissing the idea that the black church is homogenous in their activities. Instead, she builds out the idea of a spectrum, rooted in two diametrically opposite typologies of the black church. The model places a black church on the spectrum based on their priestly and prophetic functions. Churches that skew towards a focus on their priestly functions focus on the "spiritual or "other worldly" dimensions of religious life (Barnes, 2004). Churches that place more emphasis on their prophetic functions position themselves as change agents. Prophetic black churches are involved in events that lead to economic and political empowerment and the maintenance of cultural and racial identity (Barnes, 2004; Morris 1984). Priestly congregations emphasize the importance of godly living, worship, and events to meet the spiritual/religious needs of members (Barnes, 2004; Cavendish, Welch, and Leege 1998). And while both functions can exist, to some degree, in most churches, there is a leaning towards one focus or the other. Understanding the varying roles that black churches play in Charlotte is key component of understanding their involvement in conversations around equity and education.

Neoliberalism and the Church

Neoliberalism and religion have a complicated relationship. While there is evidence that there have been many unintended consequences for faith based

organizations under neoliberalism, others argue that religion has supported the proliferation of neoliberalism. It is likely that both realities are true to some degree.

Today, the income gap between the wealthiest and poorest citizens continues to widen. As the gap widens, blaming poverty on poor people's behavior is having a resurgence in public debate (Goode, 2006). In reaction, some black and white church networks in the city have shifted their approaches. Those who have shifted their approach have moved from a focus on justice (or a systems based approach) to calling for the reform of individuals through market-oriented individual entrepreneurship and/or strong patriarchal family values.

As state and federal governments shift the burden of many social programs on to churches and nonprofits, religious organizations also find themselves in the role of service provider. Goode argues that as a result of this shift, external pressures on faith-based organizations to secure stable funding and recruit more volunteers have increased dramatically. However, rather than developing programs oriented around justice, Goode (2006) argues that churches have begun developing programs that more closely resemble an "assembly line", trying to quickly create the ideal citizen.

Faith-based organizations operate within new constraints (such as funding, surveillance, and regulation). Their activities are embedded in an environment of professionalized service provision, the hallmark of the political, economic, and cultural environment we live in today.

Prior research also fails to support claims that faith-based groups are more effective than their secular counterparts at delivering services (Goode, 2006; Hutcheson 2006). It is also important to point out the incredible variation that exists between faith-based organizations. Mega-churches and small one room ministries will have very

different capabilities. Goode (2006) writes that short-staffed and under-funded, the well-meaning and self-exploiting church volunteers and staff do not experience low morale. Instead they get caught in a loop of 'hyper achievement and self-congratulation' based on their belief in the power of positive thinking and reliance on prayer. There is immense pride as a result of very little impact. Paternalistic practices perpetuate a cycle of liberating poor people to participate in the low wage labor market that props up the economic engine of neoliberalism.

Neoliberal politics have also become conflated with religious beliefs. Jordan (2014) writes that "the confluence of religious socio-political beliefs and the political-economic ideology of neoliberalism manifests itself in the Republican party" (p.52). In the U.S. there is a strong correlation between an individual's degree of religiosity and partisanship; the more religious a person is, the more likely they are to be affiliated with the Republican Party (Jordan, 2014). This is especially true in the American South. While there are notable exceptions, the most highly religious Americans are likely to be Republicans (Jordan, 2014; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Jordan writes that "most people in the US subscribe to neoliberalism, at least tacitly, and most people in the US also self-identify as Christian, so this is a sizable and important portion, if not a majority, of people" (p.57). This is somewhat puzzling as the Bible makes numerous mentions of caring for the poor, stewardship for the environment, and sharing wealth. Jordan hypothesizes that given what the Bible says about these issues, we would expect to see a greater percentage of American Christians who are mobilized against neoliberal capitalism due to its detriments, but this is hardly the case. Instead, what we observe is that American Christians often vote the same way as economic conservatives, Republicans, or libertarians on economic issues. While the relationship between religion

and neoliberalism is complex, it is evident that even the church has not escaped the influence of this dominating ideology. This fact underscores the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in almost every facet of life.

3.6 Education Policy And The Search For Equity

The education of society's children is deeply intertwined with almost every other facet of daily life. The health of communities, states, and nations are inseparable from the prosperity of schools and the quality of children's education. Education is a crucial determinant of life chances. This is especially true in a city like Charlotte, where economic mobility proves to be extremely challenging. Quality education is one of the most reliable tools against stagnant mobility. Despite this, many struggling communities that would most benefit from access to quality education are less likely to have it. Understanding the history of CMS is an important part of understanding the state of education in the city today. Before diving into CMS specifically, it is important to situate the district within the national context of education policy and efforts to improve schools.

Federal Education Policy

Public K-12 education is offered in all 50 states. The nation's education system is comprised of more than 14,000 local school districts, 100,000 schools and employs more than 5 million people. 48 million students attend public schools. The entire system costs more than $2 billion each day (Gunderman, 2015). It is not surprising that this massive system can be slow to change. Despite this, there have been sweeping changes to the education system in the last several decades.

Many of these policy changes are part of what is often referred to as "education reform". What is wrong with our schools, anyway? For starters, the United States is falling behind other developed countries when it comes to educational achievements (DeSilver, 2017). Furthermore, "… the new mission of schools is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented" (p. 2). As our society changes and becomes more advanced, well educated children become even more important.

Extreme disparities in quality education are hard to ignore. Warren and Mapp argue that "The failures of public education represent a profound and perhaps the most important social justice issue of our day" (p.12). They even go as so far as to claim that education is the civil rights issue of our time (Warren and Mapp, 2011). Many low income families and children of color continue to find access and opportunity to the social and economic benefits of American life denied to them because of the lack of good education. This highlights how closely intertwined education and economic mobility are.

Table 3 provides an overview of key federal education policies. A large portion of these policies are central to providing equitable access to education for all students. In the mid 1950s and after, courts began to focus on a variety of social conditions. Their focus was ensuring equal protection under the law on facets of life such as voting rights, housing, employment, and education. This court activity worked to ensure that federally guaranteed rights were not hindered by state or local policies. Local control of schools evolved during this time as federal policies laid out rules for equal access.

Table 2: Federal Education Policy Timeline

Year	Policy
1954	U.S. Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education, declares the practice of racially segregating public schools unconstitutional.
1964	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in schools based on race, color, or national origin.
1965	Title I of ESEA creates a funding source to assist local schools educating socioeconomically disadvantaged children.
1965	The Higher Education Act authorizes federal aid for post secondary students.
1972	Title IX of the Education Amendments Act prohibits public schools from discriminating based on sex
1973	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based on disability in public schools.
1975	The Education for All Handicapped Children Act requires public schools to provide a free, appropriate education to students with disabilities.
1980	Congress establishes the cabinet-level U.S. Department of Education.
2001	President George W. Bush reauthorizes ESEA as NCLB, ushering in standards-based testing reforms and sanctions against schools not meeting AYP goals.
2009	The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act earmarks more than $90 billion for education, including the Race to the Top initiative, aimed at spurring K–12 education reform.
2009	The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association launch the Common Core State Standards Initiative
2015	President Obama reauthorizes ESEA as ESSA, with a new focus on assessing student achievement by multiple measures

Racial desegregation was one of these federal policies that shook up school systems across the country. National guard mobilization, massive public protests, riots, and heated political elections are just a few examples of the high stakes nature of this issue (ASCD, 2018).

U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* found that legally enforced segregation of schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment and was damaging to students of color. This left school districts, particularly those in the South, scrambling to figure out how to integrate their schools. Fast forward to the year 2000, where more African-American children attended racially isolated schools than in 1970, and it is hard to measure the progress of this policy.

Individuals with disabilities are another population to be the focus of policies on the national level. Policies associated with this era of reform focused on two main areas: providing appropriate school services to students with physical and mental disabilities and appropriately serving non- or limited-English-speaking students.

School districts have long shown their unwillingness to serve the needs of students with disabilities. Specialized services are expensive, creating a barrier for districts with already tight budgets. Even when states provided funds specifically for students with disabilities, "local school districts all too frequently diverted all or a portion of such moneys to subsidize the regular school program" (Guthrie, 2018).

Several major court cases served as catalysts for federal policy. Key cases for students with disabilities included *Mills v. Board of Education* and *Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. *Lau v. Nichols* was a landmark case for ESL students (Guthrie, 2018). The consequence of these movements has been to increase spending for special education by billions. They also led to Congress passing the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Act 504, and other policies that directly impact students. Challenges in special education persist, however the environment for students is vastly different than just a few decades earlier.

Other changes to policies impacted education finance. Federal courts held up decisions in favor of equal funding and "adequate" education for all students, despite their personal circumstances. There were concerns for teachers, as well. Beginning in the 1950s, teachers began to unionize more rapidly and participate in more collective bargaining.

A focus on efficiency was a major driver for many other changes to education across the nation. Particular focus was given to the dollar amount spent per student. In

the 1920s and 30s, school administration emerged as a specialized field. In an effort to enhance their professionalism, education staff aimed to implement best practices borrowed from successful corporations and industries. School district consolidation was another strategy for streamlining school systems. According to Guthrie, by 1930 the number of local school districts in the United States had reached its high point–in excess of 125,000 separate units (2018). By 1976 this number had been reduced to approximately 16,000. The number of districts hovered around 14,000 at the beginning of the twenty-first century and has remained steady. It is important to note that this drastic reduction in the number of districts took place under the radar. It was barely noticed. District consolidation was especially common in the South. It also took place without much persuasive evidence that it would indeed save money.

Following the release of the report titled *A Nation at Risk*, came two decades of education reform in America. The report suggested that America's dominance in the modern world was at risk due to the mediocrity of its public education system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report left many feeling that schools were in urgent need of more rigorous standards and expectations. Born out of this anxiety were "high performance schools, high-stakes testing, academic accountability, school effectiveness, organizational efficiency, teacher productivity, performance financing, charter schools, alternative schools, break-the-mold schools, privatizing, outsourcing, and pay for results" (Guthrie, 2018, p.4). Educational policy, when supported by funding and research, can have a positive impact.

However, sweeping changes not supported by adequate research and accompanying dollars hinder progress. Darling-Hammond writes, "Such U-turns in education policy and practice are not unusual in US education. Local, state and,

sometimes, federal policies frequently force schools to change course based on political considerations rather than strong research about effective practices." (p. 14) Across the United States, policies that are meant to "reform" schools for the better end up "segregating students on the basis of race and class and exacerbating education inequities" (p.15). In many cities, Charlotte included, schools in low-income communities of color have been closed, consolidated, or co-located with charter schools. These decisions are often justified by highlighting funding constraints, low enrollment, or poor performance. However, the benefits of these reforms rarely make it to the students with the most need. In many cases, new charter schools serve proportionally fewer students with disabilities and English language learners (Perry, 2017). Some of the poorest communities often lose access to neighborhood schools.

The language of school reform is often evasive and damaging (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Picower and Kohli, 2007). When I began this study of the education landscape in Charlotte, I often used the term "school reform" or "education reform". Both terms are used several times in this study. This conceptualization came from years of hearing the term and reading many articles and books on the topic. For example, one of the most helpful books in defining my project is titled "A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform". My understanding was that the constant discussion around the need for school improvement stemmed from the fact that the status quo of education was not working, and in turn needed reforming.

However, after several interviews during the data collection phase of this project, I repeatedly heard the following sentiment. "Schools don't need reforming. They are not the problem. Instead, as one interviewee stated, what they need is adequate resources and to made a priority". As previously mentioned, this sentiment was echoed back to me

when reading the literature. As a way of acknowledging how much I learned from my interviewees, I also use terms such as "school improvement" and/or "education equity". These terms better reflect the insights of my interviewees and the true heart of this project. Our challenge is perhaps not schools themselves, but instead how we as a city and nation, support them, fund them, and legislate them. In the instances where the terms "school reform" or "education reform" are used, it is with the assumption that what needs reforming is how schools are supported and funded.

Neoliberalism, Justice and Education

The previous section discussed many education policies to emerge over the last several decades. Many of these policies can be traced to the neoliberal era in which a series of reforms seek to apply market-based mechanisms to schools (Mitchell and Lizotte, 2016). The focus on competition, choice, efficiency, and accountability are all ideals borrowed from the business world and applied to education. Slater (2015) borrows from disaster recovery literature and argues that neoliberal education reform mirrors crisis politics. Consider Slater's point that "Capitalizing on crises, neoliberal reformers position privatization as the mechanism of recovery. Rather than acknowledge their complicity in creating crises, neoliberals externalize the demands of recovery onto schools, teachers, and students" (p. 4).

Under neoliberalism, schools shortcomings are often viewed as though they operate in a vacuum. School systems alone shoulder the responsibility for the achievement gap, not poverty, racism, or other forms of structural inequality. In the neoliberal perspective, educational inequality is seen as this exception to an otherwise just society. This paradigm produces policies that help students fit into existing political-

economic systems (i.e., neoliberal capitalism) more effectively, rather than making changes to the system to better incorporate student needs.

There are many stories of communities aiming to shift away from the neoliberal approach to education. Over and over again, students, teachers, and communities have demonstrated their ability to improve their schools and influence policy making in meaningful ways (Warren and Mapp, 201). In districts across the country, community groups are increasingly engaged in educational justice work that aims to close racial, economic, and linguistic achievement and opportunity gaps (Anyon 2014; Mediratta 2007; Mediratta et al. 2008; Shirley 2009; Snipes et al. 2004; Warren 2005). These groups reflect a variety of stakeholders including parents, youth, faith-based organizations, union members, business leaders, and civil-rights groups.

Educational justice serves as an alternative to neoliberal education reform. Proponents of educational justice start by acknowledging the reality of institutionalized and interlocking structures of oppression and situate the causes of educational failure within a broader system of inequality (Nygreen, 2016). Part of this framework also includes marginalized voices. It is understood that "all communities—including and especially those that have been subordinated, silenced and oppressed—possess knowledge that is not only legitimate, but necessary, to the work of liberation" (Nygreen, 2016, p.210). Out of educational justice comes a focus on participatory democracy and educational self-determination as both the means and a primary goal. Participatory democracy is rooted in the idea that parents, families, and communities are not just useful for buy-in. Instead, it assumes that they have something of value to offer the process of school change and school improvement. As a focus on educational justice gains more

attention in some places of the country, community organizing for school improvement has been highlighted as a powerful strategy.

Community Organizing for Equity in Education

School outcomes and those of the community surrounding it are closely linked. It is not productive to act as if they are not (Warren and Mapp, 2011, p. 133). Improving schools without community is unlikely to produce great results. The same can also be said for the reverse. Most scholarship encourages community engagement and organizing in efforts towards improving education.

Three decades ago, community organizing around school improvement was largely unheard of. Community organizing groups were more inclined to focus on issues such as affordable housing, jobs, and blight. Similarly, schools were not focused on engaging community groups. Instead, research was encouraging schools to focus on parental involvement (Warren and Mapp, 2011). It is largely agreed upon that family involvement in education is one of the largest influences on positive outcomes for students. In recent years, family involvement has shifted to family engagement. While family involvement avoids issues of power and assigns parents a passive role in the school environment, engagement designates families as citizens in the fullest sense. Families become "agents of change who can transform schools and neighborhoods" (Warren and Mapp, 2011, p. 18).

This emergence of community organizing for school improvement and family involvement at the same time sets the stage for productive work. In communities where parents are well organized and politically influential, poor performance is not normally tolerated or allowed to persist. Yet parents in low-income communities typically do not have the political clout to effect change. The difference in power and resources across

communities means that community impact on school systems is not equal. For example, the US spends twice the amount on education in whiter and more affluent communities, than in some poorer districts within close proximity (Maciag, 2018).

Many studies highlight success stories of oppressed communities becoming empowered to influence system change within their local district or school (Gold, Simon and Brown, 2003; Gold, Simon and Mundell, 2004; Haynes and Comer, 1996; Hubbard, Stein and Mehan, 2013; Mediratta, Shah, and McAlister, 2009; Shirley,1997; Shirley, 2009). These studies have made important contributions to community processes for educational change. Literature on community organizing for school improvement highlight how neighborhoods reclaim public schools as a "democratic public sphere" and illuminate the rampant institutionalized racism within schools (Ueno, 2015).

Community organizing for equity in education is not without critics. Some argue that some agendas of community groups are bogged down with personal biases. These groups can push for changes that result in outcomes with unintended, and even harmful, consequences for children and families. Success stories of community organizing for school improvement are critiqued for lacking a critical view of community organizations, framing them as "inherently democratic and autonomous institutions" (Nygreen, 2017). Existing literature "often implicitly assumes the interests of marginalized communities are self evident, glossing over or minimizing internal debates about aims, meanings, and strategy" (p.242). The argument is that even community organizations are not free from the influences of neoliberalism. In some cases, community organizations can just further deepen the reproduction of neoliberal agenda. Despite these concerns, community organizing for school improvement remains one of the ways communities are attempting to impact the education system.

3.7 Seeking Educational Justice

The four primary research questions of this work ask:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

A discussion of the primary approaches to system change are discussed, in order to begin picking up clues as to what methods prevail in Charlotte. Upon primary review, it appears that no one approach is a perfect fit for describing efforts for school improvement in Charlotte. It is possible that a hybrid model that combines features of more than one method will better fit the local context.

Additionally this research will add to the literature of community organizing for educational justice by firmly framing it within local spatial context. The methods employed in this study are designed to connect the "social" with the "spatial" to understand how they influence one another. Spatial justice literature has largely theorized about how injustices come to be, without providing empirical work on how communities aim to disrupt these patterns. Conversely, community organizing research has focused on outcomes of organizing processes, without identifying how spatial injustices influence the practice of organizing in the first place. This dissertation aims to be a bridge between

community organizing within education and spatial justice literature that is firmly grounded in place, accounting for historical context.

A discussion of the South, neoliberalism, and religion were necessary to begin to explore possible influences on approaches to system change in Charlotte. Furthermore, the neoliberal city provides context for how spatial injustices, specifically within education, are reinforced. Community organizing is a potential response to neoliberal policies and spatial injustice. It is hoped that this research can continue to uncover more nuanced influences on the culture of collective action in the city.

This dissertation aims to contribute to spatial justice literature by critically analyzing how effective different approaches have been at facilitating more just outcomes within one New South city. Much of the spatial justice literature has suggested that there is power in community organizing and place based mobilization. Furthermore, there has been robust discussion around collective action and social justice efforts. However, few researchers have attempted to analyze how successful different methods of collective action are in the facilitation of educational justice with an explicit focus on the spatial. This study will look closely at how collective action and spatial justice are interrelated using methods that can be adapted in other cities, Southern cities in particular. By grounding the methods in Southern history, this work is better able to understand current conditions.

This study will not compare approaches to change to determine which one results in the most spatial and educational justice. However, this study will describe how educational justice and school improvement is addressed in one particular place, and discuss how the local tactics have influenced local policies and decision-making that ultimately contribute to or hinder justice outcomes. This contribution has the potential to

inspire future work that will continue to analyze the ability of various community oriented models to facilitate spatial and educational justice.

4. Methods

This chapter describes the research methodology for this qualitative grounded theory study. Quantitative data, such as demographic data, played a role in laying the groundwork for this study, however it is not at the core of this project. This project relied on a variety of sources to obtain rich qualitative data. Key methods included discourse analysis, qualitative interviews, participant observations, and socio-spatial network analysis. Together these methods were used to understand the approaches used by different stakeholders to foster change within CMS. The variety of methods were selected for their ability to gather deep and meaningful experiences of every day, and to uncover different socio-spatial connections and power dynamics. A detailed description of the methodology, participant selection, and data analysis is provided.

Research Questions

Methods were chosen that would be the most helpful in answering the following research questions:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

Methodology Selected

Because of the focus on people, their beliefs and social interactions, information sharing, and networks, this study lends itself to primarily qualitative methods. This study does not focus on differences in specific variables, but instead focuses on the experiences and perceptions of Charlotteans. Predominantly quantitative methods would not be appropriate for examining the complexities of the power dynamics and emotions that are a crucial part of this story.

Ethical Concerns

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was given before implementing the project. Following the methods as outlined in this chapter with ethical considerations in mind ensure the reliability of the study. The informed consent fact sheet was given to each interviewee prior to meeting. The fact sheet is included in Appendix F. The risks associated with this study were minimal. Participants were assured that their comments would not be attributed to them and that an executive summary of the research would be shared with them following final approval from the committee.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory methodology informed this research project. Grounded theory is comprised of a set of strategies for analyzing data that uncover relationships within it. The process is systematic and helpful for structuring and organizing rich and nuanced qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006). There are six distinct characteristics of grounded theory as identified by Charmaz. These characteristics include:

1. Conducting data gathering and analysis concurrently

2. Identifying codes, themes, and categories from data not from preconceived notions/hypothesis
3. Creating "mid-range" theories along the way
4. Memo-making and writing notes as codes emerge, a "crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers"
5. Theoretical sampling
6. Delay of the literature review

Grounded theory methods result in a more iterative process, with many phases of the research happening in tandem. Grounded theory methods provide many opportunities for researchers to refine and develop their ideas about the data. A deep knowledge of the data is key to this method. Reflecting on the characteristics of grounded theory methodology, I can identify all six within my own research process.

The Researcher

Some would argue an important step in conducting rigorous research is putting our preconceived notions and biases to the side. However, it is virtually impossible for researchers to separate their lived experiences and expectations from the analysis itself. As a result, in attempts to ensure transparency and rigor I need to incorporate how my own positionality influenced how I conducted the project and interpreted findings. Waitt (in Hay, 2010) suggests including a positionality statement to disclose any relevant connections between the researcher's own life and the study.

For the past five years, I have worked with the Charlotte Action Research Project (CHARP) and several other organizations, and could be viewed by some as as a professional community organizer. I don't identify this way, however it is possible that this perception of my work exists. Additionally, I have a normative stance on community

organizing. I believe it is an important strategy when used by marginalized people. It is impossible for me to separate my views about organizing from this work. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge my normative views that will be infused in this work.

Charlotte is in many ways, a 'little big city'. Many of the interviewees of this project are individuals I already knew prior to this study. Some of the relationships are superficial, where others I have worked closely with for several years. When reviewing materials for the discourse analysis, I focused on the current questions at hand for this dissertation. I actively worked to consider how my past relationships with individuals were influencing my interpretation of the content.

As a professional in the field of education and an advocate for a variety of justice issues, I also need to acknowledge that the research is intertwined with my own normative views of how educational inequities should be addressed. While some insights revealed during this research process disheartened me or upset me, I have been able to report the findings nonetheless. It was important to continually reflect on my positionality for the duration of the project. The importance of the positionality statement will vary from project to project, but in my case I find it valuable.

4.1 Discourse Analysis

One of the key methods utilized in this study is discourse analysis. Discourse is an abstract concept, however Waitt (in Hay, 2010) has boiled down Foucault's use of "discourse" into three main concepts. Discourse refers to: (1) all meaningful statements or texts that have effects on the world; (2) a group of statements that appear to have a common theme that provides them with a unified effect; and (3) the rules and structures that underpin and govern the unified coherent, and forceful statements that are

produced. Discourse analysis aims to uncover how particular strains of knowledge convince people about what exists in the world (meanings) and determine what they say and do.

Benford and Snow, the leading scholars in frame analysis, have highlighted the relationship between discourse and framing. They argue that discourse affects events which, in turn, may influence the underlying ideas or beliefs that make up either the discourses and frames used by movement actors (Benford and Snow, 2000). Discourse can influence which set of collective action frames or beliefs are salient, which can alter the power of a particular discourse. It is a bit of a chicken or the egg question, when discussing how discourse and framing influence one another, however it is clear that they are interrelated.

Carrying out a discourse analysis is a nuanced art. The process has been left rather vague, and has been left open to interpretation by a variety of disciplines. Discourse analysis is highly adaptable. Too much rigidity would reduce its impact. However, Waitt provides a set of broad steps for conducting discourse analysis (2010).

The first step involves the selection of source materials. Materials written between 2010 and 2018 were selected for review. This date range was chosen for two reasons. First, 2010 and today mark two times of notable "upheaval" within the CMS system. This timespan provided a wealth of important and widely discussed events and incidents for review. Secondly, economic development in Charlotte is intimately connected to the evolution of local schools. Development in Charlotte has been growing exponentially since 2010. This allows the analysis to be limited to a time of rather consistent growth and economic conditions. Table 4 showcases the time range of materials reviewed. It is not

surprising that CMS was more widely discussed in the years 2010 and 2018 due to major controversies around student assignment, school closures, and economic mobility.

Table 3: Distribution of Discourse Materials by Year

Year	Number of Texts
2010	82
2011	43
2012	20
2013	11
2014	9
2015	3
2016	12
2017	38
2018	82
TOTAL	**300**

The list of materials analyzed is intentionally diverse. Each source was selected because of its relevance to the education landscape in Charlotte. Texts for analysis were sourced from maps, news stories, reports, social media posts, planning and other government documents, public meeting and hearing minutes, and blog posts. These source materials were selected because they were either produced by a major publication, written by someone with influence in the education space, recommended to me by an interviewee, or received much attention on social media. Table 5 is a breakdown of where the materials for the analysis originated from.

Table 4: Discourse Materials by Source

Source	Number of Texts
Charlotte Observer	189
CMS	53
WFAE	8
Business Journal	21
Creative Loafing	14
WBTV	2
Personal/ Org Blogs	6
WCNC	3
Facebook	4
TOTAL	**300**

Table 6 lists search terms that were used as part of an online search for text. The search terms were selected to have an explicit focus on both approaches to systems change and school improvement. It is important to note that some search terms were used after preliminary results from other search terms. Identifying appropriate terms to search was an iterative process. Between an extensive internet search and recommendations from study participants, a total of 300 relevant texts were identified. This number is far more than I anticipated, but each piece highlighted different parts of a larger story. Figure 3 is a screenshot from NViVo highlighting a sample of article titles. This large number helped ensure intertextuality. This term describes the assumption that "meanings are produced as a series of relationships between texts rather than residing within the text itself" (Waitt in Hay, 2010).

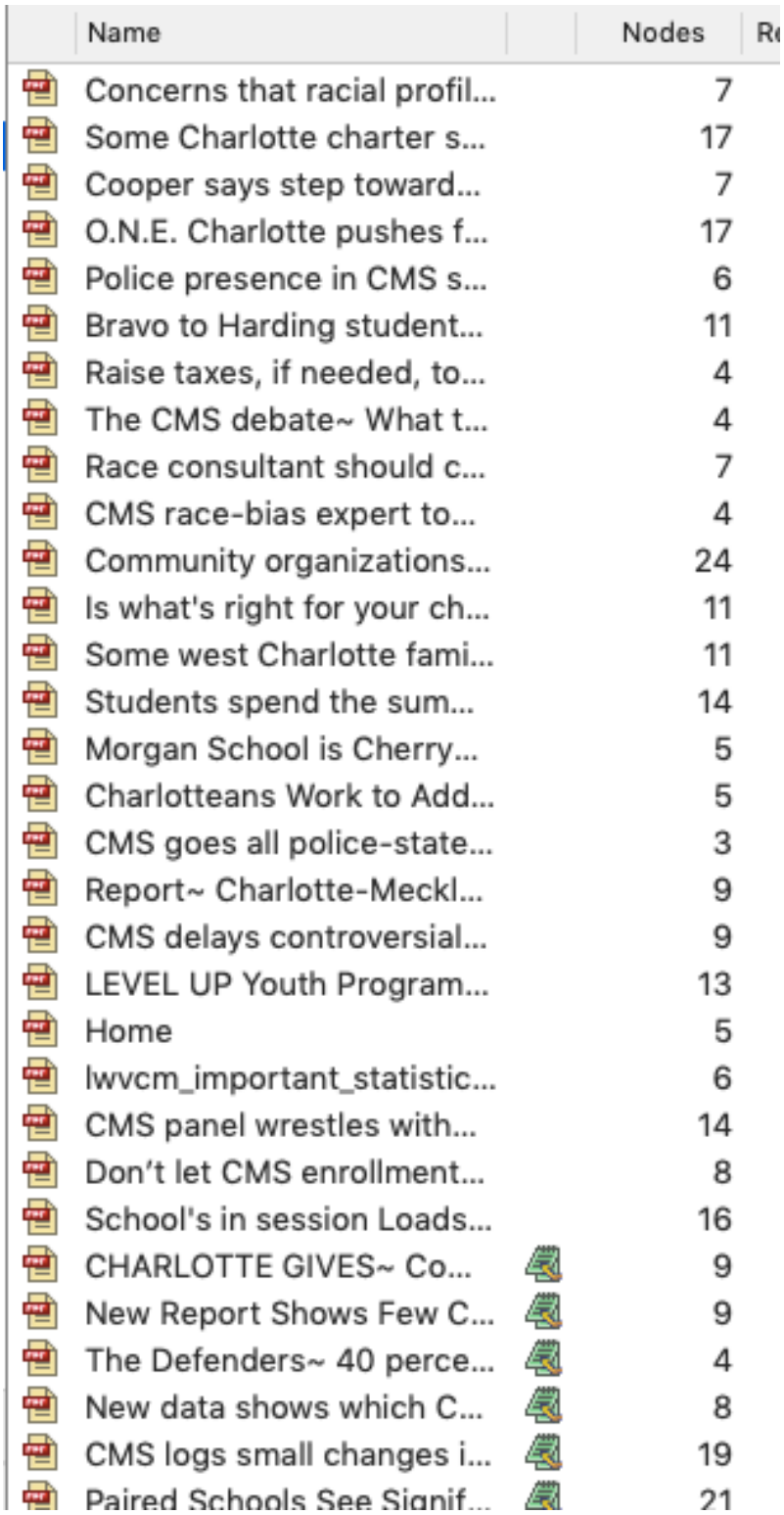


Figure 3 : Sample Articles in Discourse Analysis

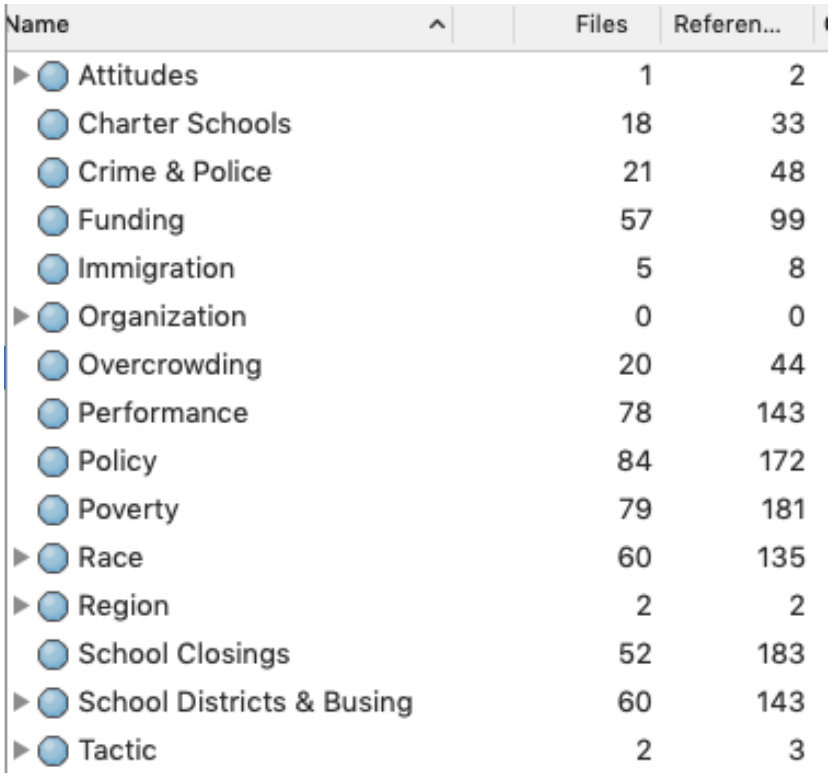
Table 5: Search Terms

Search Terms ***Note : all search terms will include 'Charlotte' as a modifier/filter**		
Community organization	Protest	Community organizing
Task force	Community task force	Citizen advisory board
Riot	Community rally	Neighborhood meeting
Neighborhood group	Neighborhood organizing	Neighborhood activist
Neighborhood activism	Grassroots organizing	Grassroots activism
Neighborhood protest	Neighborhood push back	Resident push back
Spatial justice	Social justice	CMS
Neighborhood	School	School improvement
School reform	Education policy	Superintendent
Education equity	School segregation	School assignment
School closure	Overcrowding	teachers

The materials analyzed highlighted the various issues on the minds of residents surrounding education. Key stakeholders leading and participating in the discussions around education were also identified. The codebook (Appendix A) that was used for the analysis includes multiple layers of coding. Preliminary codes were established after a review of a few key articles. As more and more texts were processed, codes were added. This is what Mayring (2002) calls evolutionary coding, when categories evolve from theoretical considerations into a full-fledged operational list based on empirical data. One layer of coding specified which geography was being discussed in the text. This layer of

coding was needed in hopes to identify spatial themes. Different parts of Charlotte have experienced both similar and distinct disadvantages and advantages. This code helped to identify if there were distinct conversations around education depending on the geography of focus. The location component is particularly important considering this work is meant to critically analyze education in relation to spatial justice.

The activity codes and topic codes were used to identify specific strategies and areas of concern. The stakeholder code denotes who the key driver of an activity or policy is. Education issues typically involve a wide range of people and organizations, so the collaboration code was used to account for partnerships. Figure 4 is a screenshot from NViVo that highlights the different code types used. The codes evolved over time.



Name	Files	Referen...
Attitudes	1	2
Charter Schools	18	33
Crime & Police	21	48
Funding	57	99
Immigration	5	8
Organization	0	0
Overcrowding	20	44
Performance	78	143
Policy	84	172
Poverty	79	181
Race	60	135
Region	2	2
School Closings	52	183
School Districts & Busing	60	143
Tactic	2	3

Figure 4: Codes

There is value in noting not only what is said, but what goes unsaid. When doing discourse analysis, it is important to acknowledge that particular voices are favored over others. Part of the findings of the analysis include what parts of the conversation were missing from the discourse.

4.2 Qualitative Interviews

Interviews provided an opportunity to treat the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders as knowledgeable, capable and reflective participants in the research process (Kwan and Ding, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders within Charlotte's education space. A total of 52 individuals were interviewed. The interviewees represent a diverse range of demographics and geographies within Charlotte.

I identified initial interview participants based on my personal knowledge of Charlotte and the results of the discourse analysis. After this, I utilized a snowball sample. The snowball sample was exhausted at 52 participants. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if they could recommend a few names of people for me to interview. Upon interviewing my 52nd person, all the names suggested were individuals I had already interviewed. This was happening regularly by the time I reached the 45th person. However, there was always one person I had not yet spoke to, until I reached the last interview.

Because the snowball sample did not provide any additional interview opportunities beyond 52, I have satisfied saturation for the purposes of this study. Saturation is a process as opposed to a single identifiable point. Strauss and Corbin (1998) talk about saturation as a 'matter of degree', arguing that there will always be the potential for 'the "new" to emerge'. They suggest that saturation should be more

concerned with reaching the point where further data collection becomes 'counter-productive', and where the 'new' does not necessarily add anything to the overall story or theory. Mason (2010) makes a similar argument, highlighting the point at which there are 'diminishing returns' from further data-collection, and a number of researchers seem to take incremental approach to saturation. Upon reviewing my data and talking with participants, I am confident that any additional interviews would be redundant or counter-productive. I would echo arguments made by Nelson (2016) and Dey (1999) that the term 'saturation' can be problematic, as it intuitively lends itself to thinking in terms of a fixed point and a sense of 'completeness'. I take their advice, and instead sought to reach 'conceptual depth' (Nelson, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were used because they maintain a level of flexibility while also ensuring that a pre-determined set of questions are asked of each interviewee. The semi-structured interview guide is included in Appendix B. The interview method was selected because it is a necessary component of collecting complex attitudes, meanings, and experiences that observations and quantitative data alone can not provide (Hay, 2010). Interview was used rather than focus groups because in a focus group setting, it may be difficult for people to speak candidly amongst people they have positive or negative personal history with. I wanted to ensure interviews were conducted in an environment that facilitated as much openness as possible. Each interview was between 45 minutes and two hours. Interviews were recorded to ensure that the interview was accurately captured and so I could provide the interviewee with my uninterrupted attention. Interviews were listened to and transcribed soon after the interview.

The interview questions were designed to gather insights about how different individuals with unique positions approach education reform in Charlotte. The questions

allow interviewees to elaborate on what they feel is the right "direction" for CMS. Participants were able to elaborate on the areas of concern they prioritize, who and where their collaborators are, and what success might look like.

The interview questions can be considered to have 4 main themes. The first set of questions aimed to establish the background of the interviewee. Questions asked where they are from originally and how they have been involved in issues related to education. There are also a few questions that ask them to describe the strategies they use and how they have been effective in improving schools in Charlotte. Questions then go into topics related to collaborators and adversaries, and their respective geographies. These questions are designed to gather information about how the interviewees perceive spatial relationships in Charlotte. Paired with the network analysis, this provided a rich amount of data.

Interviews were analyzed for common themes, conflicts, and any signs of consensus amongst interviewees. Interview data was also coded with the assistance of NVivo software. A latent content analysis was used to try to identify these themes. Interviews were a key part enriching the other data from the discourse analysis, observations, and the network analysis.

4.3 Observations

Observations were also gathered to see interactions between individuals in real time. Observations were done at neighborhood and community meetings, public hearings/ board of education meetings, committee and task force meetings, and faith-based forums. The purpose of these observations was twofold. The observations provided complementary evidence. Attending the meetings at a variety of spaces provided

"additional descriptive information" that enhances the other forms of data collection. These observations were useful in understanding the dynamics of these particular places actually play out. I was able to have some of these spaces described to me in interviews, and then also witness them myself. Extensive field notes were taken at these meetings to ensure observations were recorded accurately. Figure 5 showcases the variety of spaces where I conducted observations.

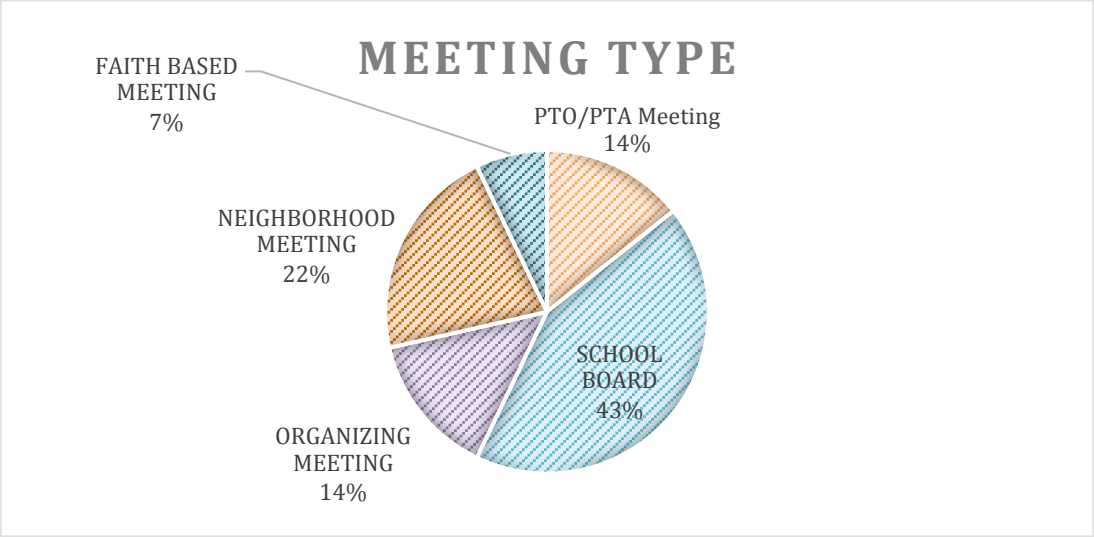


Figure 4: Observation Meeting Type

While I am very familiar with many gathering spaces relevant to education in Charlotte, I am not a frequent attendee of many of these group meetings. Attending these various meetings in the midst of my work provided me with a better level of understanding when participants discussed them with me during interviews. After each interview I either asked participants to recommend one or two meetings that I could attend, or they offered recommendations before I could ask. The observation guide is included in Appendix C. In total I attended 13 meetings in a variety of settings and gathered approximately 28 hours of observations. Across all meetings, approximately 403

people were observed. Table 7 lists the type of each meeting and the approximate number of attendees.

Table 6: Approximate number of attendees by meeting

MEETING	# OF ATTENDEES
PTO/PTA 1	12
PTO/PTA 2	19
SCHOOL BOARD	42
SCHOOL BOARD	31
SCHOOL BOARD	48
SCHOOL BOARD	39
SCHOOL BOARD	32
SCHOOL BOARD	41
ORGANIZING MEETING	29
ORGANIZING MEETING	25
NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING	21
NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING	12
FAITH BASED	52
TOTAL	**403**

I made an intentional choice to only observe and not participate. It was unlikely I would've been able to contribute in a meaningful way by only attending one or two meetings of a particular group.

To see how information is created and shared between networks in this area, I needed to be able to observe it happening in every day life. While I gathered rich data from participants in other ways, I also felt it was important to observe "every day spontaneity" (Hay, 2010). Most observations took take place at advertised meetings open to the public. Access to these gatherings was relatively straight forward. Two meetings were invite only, and I was able to go because of an interviewee. There may be additional

meetings that would be relevant but are invisible to me as a researcher. This will be discussed later as a shortcoming of this work.

4.4 Socio-Spatial Network Analysis

A network is a set of relationships. These relationships can be among individual people or organizations. What is at the heart of justice based work? Relationships. It is logical then, that network analysis would be a key component of understanding the education landscape in Charlotte. Network analysis typically highlights connections based on relationships. However, this study added a spatial layer to that relational data. Mapping relationships across space is helpful when trying to understand the geography of school improvement and educational challenges in Charlotte. Understanding whether collaborations cross neighborhood boundaries is key to understanding both spatial justice outcomes and impacts. This method was needed to determine whether the spatial network of education reform efforts resembled patterns of spatial (in)justice in Charlotte. Data for the network analysis were collected immediately following the qualitative interview. The network analysis guide is included in Appendix D.

Previous studies have highlighted that network analysis is useful for demonstrating the connections and relationships among individuals, organizations, agencies, and other groups, reflecting the structure of the network (Jariego-Isidro and Holgado; 2015; Provan, Veazie, Staten, and Teufel, 2005). Unlike other methods, the focus is on the relationship, not just the organization itself. Network analysis allows for the examination and comparison of relationships between two individuals or organizations (dyads), among clusters or cliques of individuals or organizations, and among all that makes up a network

(MDRC, 2017). According to MDRC (2017), a network is comprised of the following components:

- Node
    - An actor within a network
- Tie
    - A direct relationship between two actors

A network can be analyzed in several ways. Two of the network traits that are most commonly explored are density and betweenness centrality.

- Density
    - The overall connectedness within a network, measuring how many relationships have formed compared with all that could possibly form.
- Betweeness Centrality
    - The degree to which an actor acts as an exclusive broker or bridge between two other actors that would not otherwise be connected.

Network analysis is useful in describing several aspects of relationships within a network. According to Provan et al. (2005), depending on the type of data collected, it is possible to examine:

- the number of other organizations to which one organization is linked
- the total number of links in the network
- the types of interactions between organizations
- the level of the relationship
- the extent or strength of each relationship

- the level of trust that each organization has in its dealings with every other, and
- the perceived benefits and drawbacks of network involvement

Understanding to what degree different stakeholders are connected with one another is an essential part of this study. Connectedness will be measured both socially, through relationships, and spatially through geographic reach. Prior studies have shown that a node's position in the overall network can influence what it can and can't accomplish (Jariego-Isidro, 2015; MDRC, 2017). Provan et al. (2005 argue that "even when an organization has sufficient resources and works well with its immediate partners…isolation from the larger network can limit its influence". The space the the network exists in can also influence how well actors cooperate with each other (Robertson, Lewis, Sloane, Galloway-Gilliam, and Nomachi, 2011). A systems approach can illustrate the network's ability to respond to external shocks and to mobilize or build power to take advantage of opportunities (Robertson et al., 2011). This highlights the importance of a network approach to understanding system dynamics.

Summary

This dissertation provides a snapshot of education improvement landscape in Charlotte at a particular moment in time. Getting a baseline understanding of what is happening in this city will be helpful for future work. This combination of qualitative methods and socio-spatial network analysis for this purpose is particularly unique. It presents an opportunity to build both theoretical and practical insights about the ways that various stakeholders approach education change in Charlotte, NC, a city who's education system is often being discussed at the national scale.

5. Findings

The use of the aforementioned methods resulted in a variety of findings directly related to the research questions:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

This chapter reports findings from the analysis conducted consistent with grounded theory methodology. This chapter also includes details of the study sample. At each phase of the research, analysis was an iterative process, with consistent reflection built in to break the data down further, until themes were identified. Excerpts from interviews, discourse, observation notes, graphics, and maps from throughout the process are used to highlight key themes and the resultant theory. An overview of findings from each of the methods used is provided. This is followed by a discussion of findings that emerge when the data is synthesized resulting from the triangulation of methods.

5.1 Study Participants

Fifty-two participants were interviewed for this research project. Participants were diverse in almost every relevant aspect of the study. Age, race, hometown, education, and location within Charlotte were all widely varied. Age ranges 18 and over were represented, with most participants falling between ages 36-50. Both men and women were represented in the study, with most participants being women (62%).

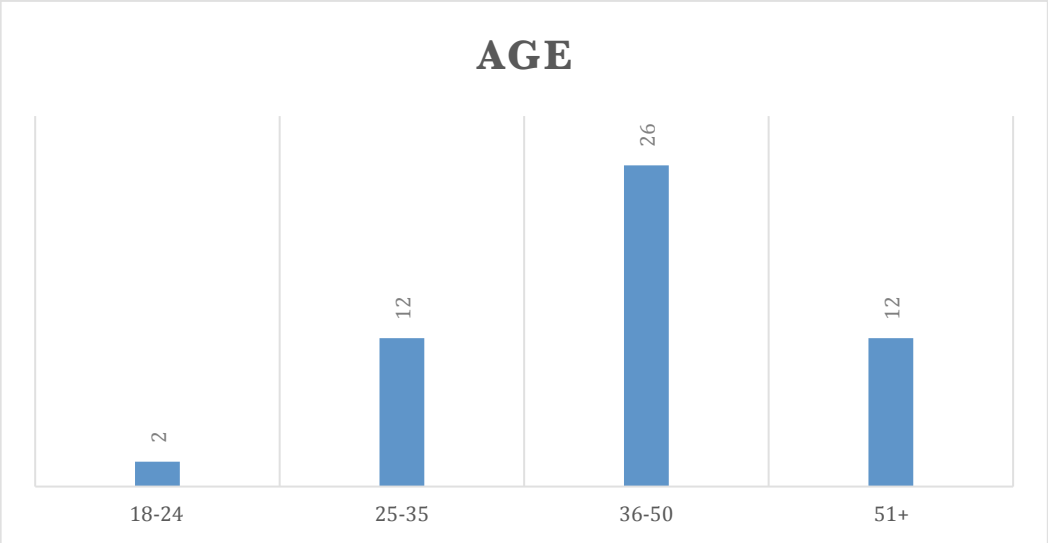


Figure 5: Interviewee Age

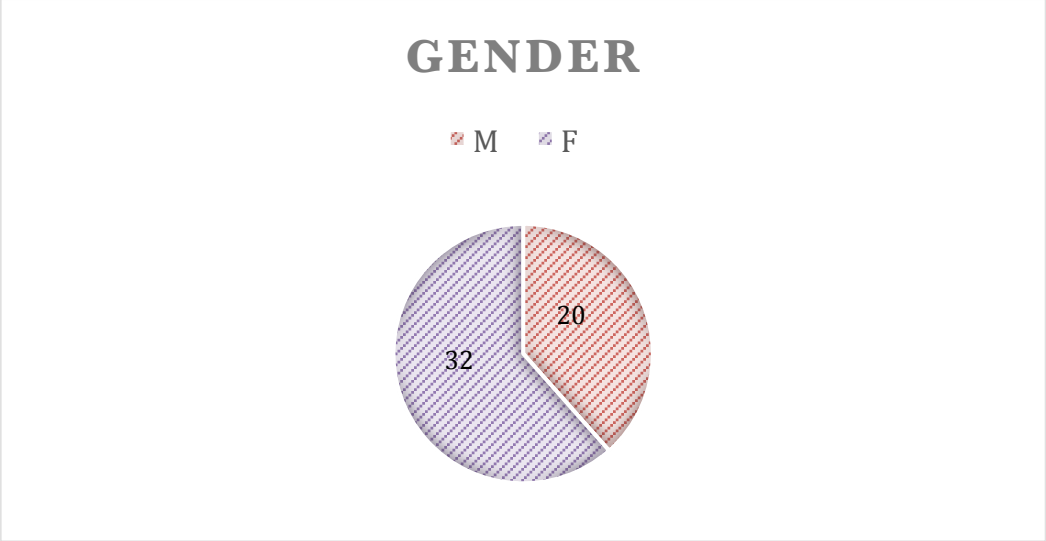


Figure 6: Interviewee Gender

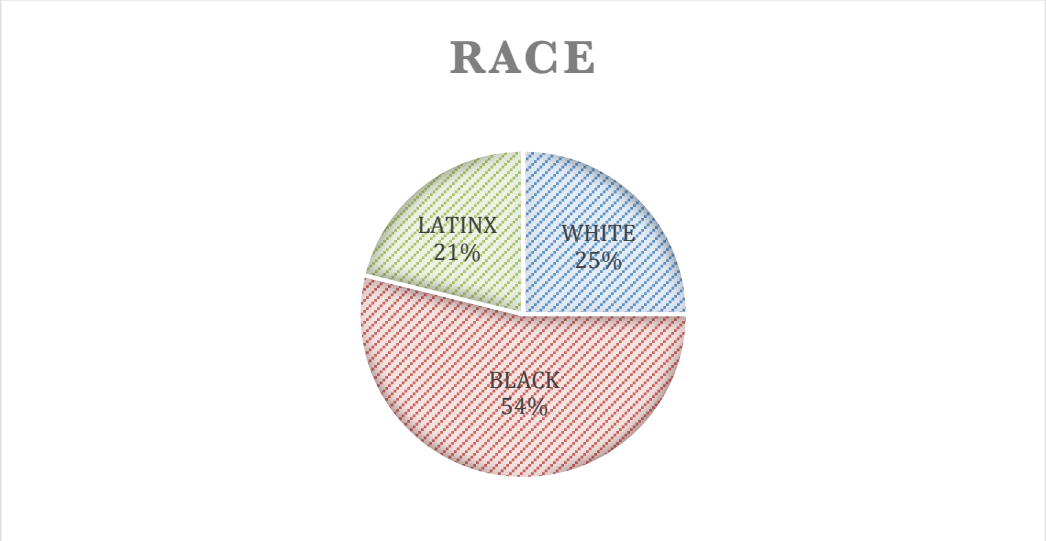


Figure 7: Interviewee Race

Most participants (54%) identified as Black, with the rest of the study participants being White or Latinx. No participants declined to identify their race. No participants identified as Native American, Asian, or Other Race. Education amongst participants also varied. Most levels of education were represented, including 35% of participants graduating high school, 46% with a bachelor's degree, 15% with a masters, 4% with a Ph.D. No participants reported having less than a high school education.

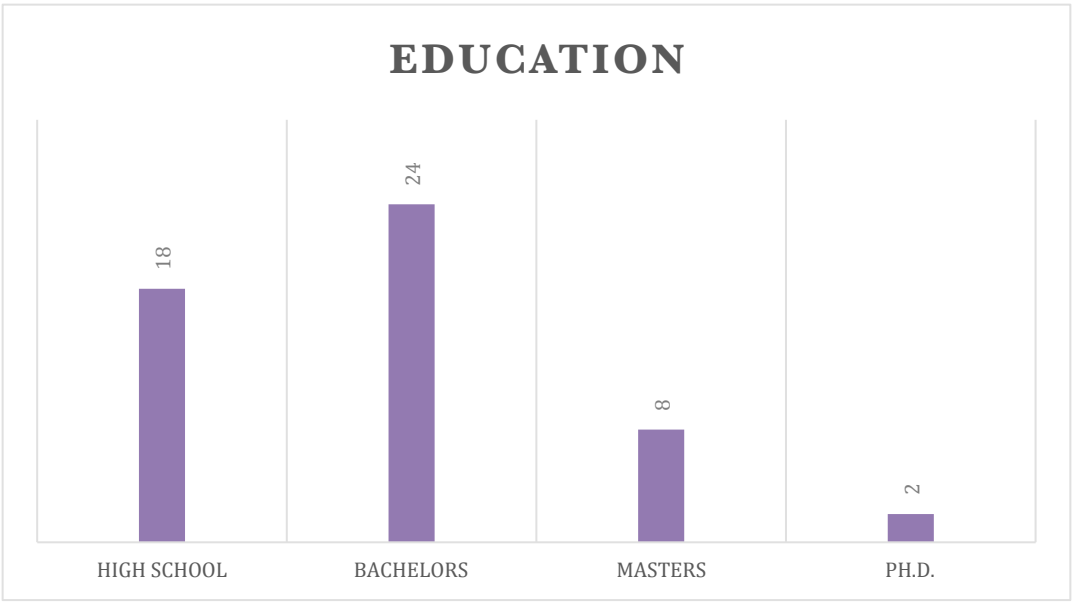


Figure 8: Interviewee Education

Interview participants represented all parts of Charlotte. Map X referenced in the introductory chapter represents the city regions used for determining a participant's regions. Most participants (37%) are associated with West Charlotte, however all regions are represented. The suburban region refers to towns within Mecklenburg County, but areas outside of Charlotte city limits. This region made up 17% of the sample.

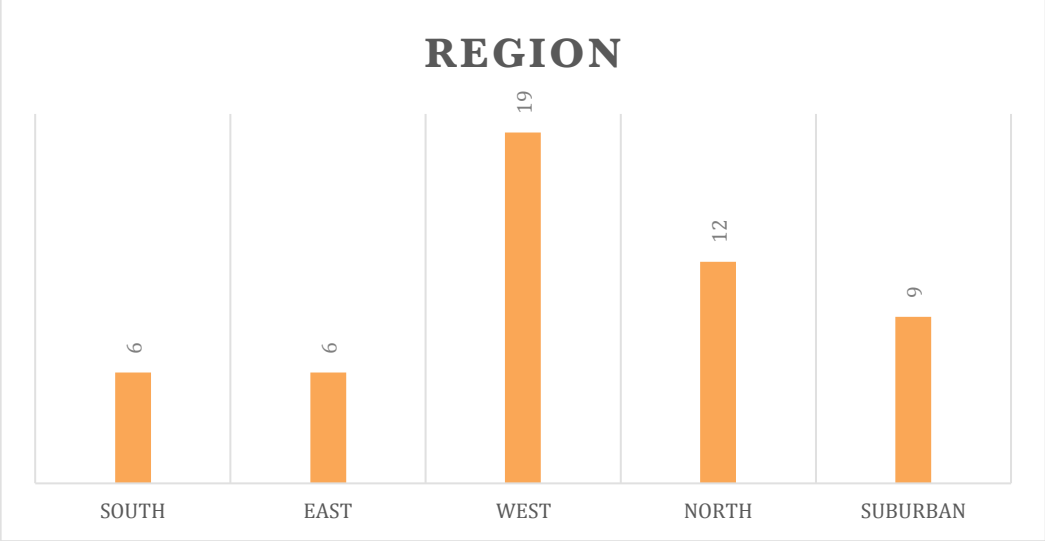


Figure 9: Interviewee By Region

With Charlotte continuing on its path of rapid growth, it is not surprising that participants are originally from a variety of places outside of the Charlotte metro region.

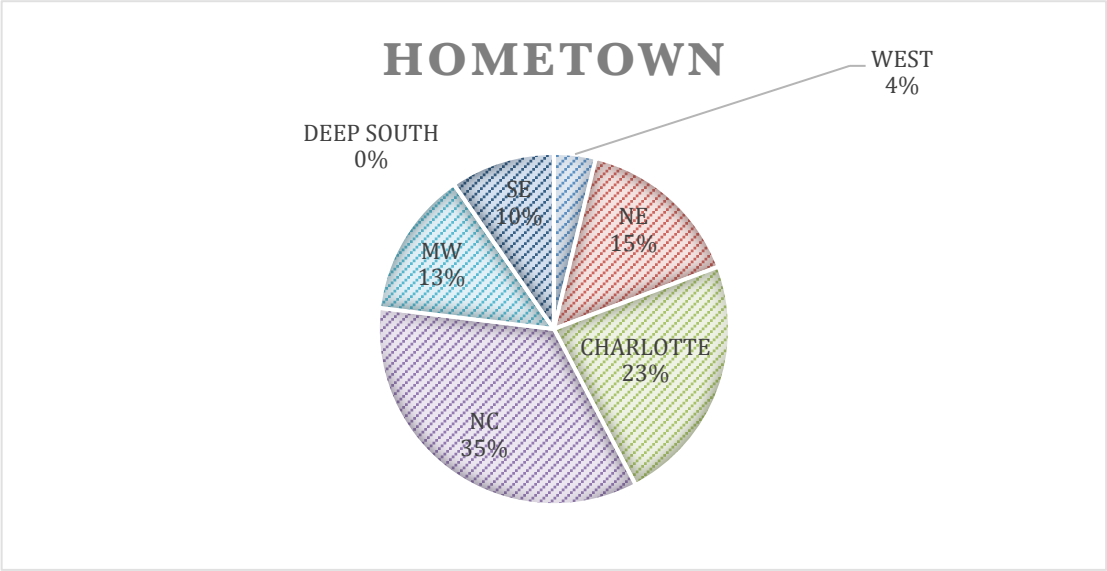


Figure 10: Interviewee Hometown

In fact, most participants (35%) are not from Charlotte, but some other city within North Carolina. The second largest group of participants (23%) are Charlotte natives. Most other regions of the United States are represented, including the Midwest (IL, MN, IN), other states within the Southeast (GA, SC, FL), West (CA, CO), and the Northeast (NY, NJ, CT). However, no participants were from the Deep South or Southwest. Additionally, no participants were from locations outside the United States.

To understand the perspective of interviewees, I also wanted to know whether they currently have or have had a child attend a CMS school. A majority (81%) of participants currently have a child enrolled in a CMS school, or have had in the past. Participants who were active in school improvement conversations but did not have a child, or who's children never attended CMS had a few different reasons for their engagement. Most often, people stated that while the education system in Charlotte did

not directly impact their day-to-day family life, they felt education was an issue that impacted all community residents of all walks of life.

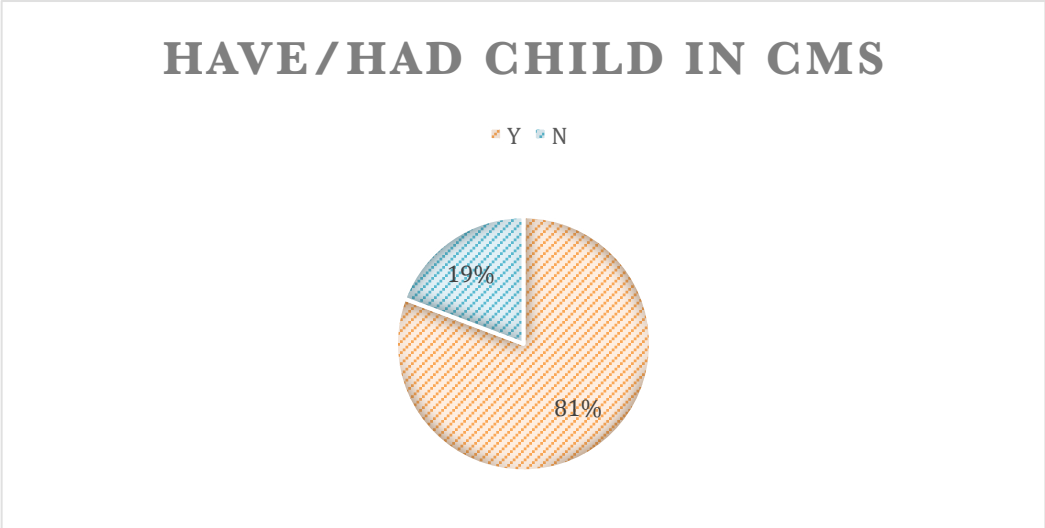


Figure 11: Interviewee with children in CMS

I also assigned a label to each interview participant to differentiate them by their respective "roles". Participants were asked if the label was appropriate to confirm they were being allocated properly. The final list of roles were: faith leader, community member (parent), community member (non-parent), nonprofit staff, school board member, teacher, and government employee. It is possible for participants to fall in more than one group, for example a parent who is also active in their church. However, participants were asked to consider the role they most frequently consider primary in relation to school affairs. Most interviewees (25%) are parents and active community members. May interviewees were also nonprofit staff. Three school board members were also interviewed.

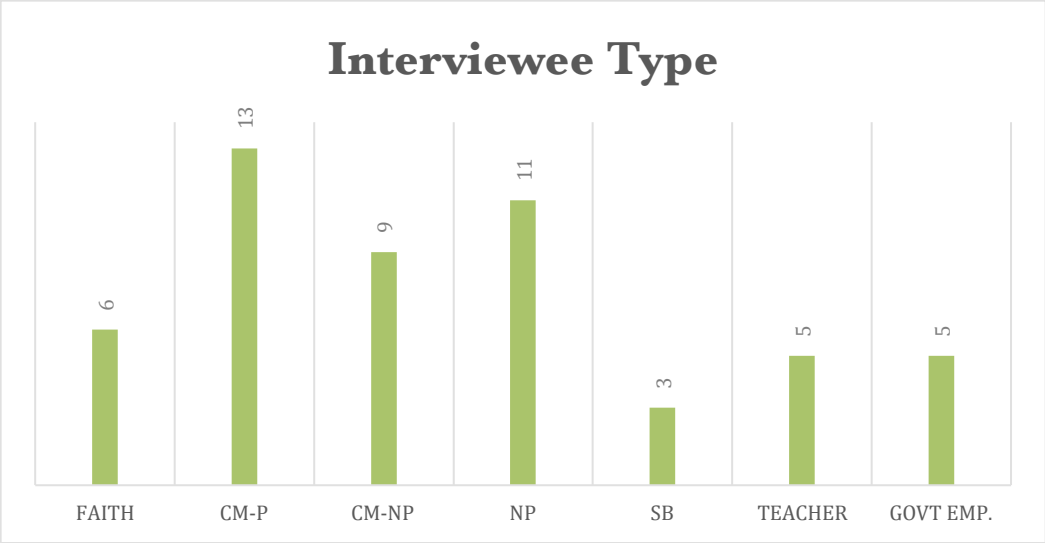


Figure 12: Interviewees by Role

Interviews were transcribed in batches once per week. This allowed for 2-3 interviews to be coded and reviewed at a time. From each batch of interviews, codes and themes emerged. Notes about codes and themes were notated on paper copies of each transcription. Following a grounded theory process, as new themes or points of relevance emerged from the data, interview questions were added and preliminary codes identified. Clarifying questions were added to the interview method following the completion of the first three interviews. Details of additional questions and coding process are located in Appendix E.

Once interviews were transcribed, they were uploaded into NVivo 12 for further analysis. Each interview was coded a second time using the software and then compared to the handwritten codes and notes initially completed. Once all interviews were completed, all transcripts were available for constant comparative analysis. This helped ensure the research process was aligned with best practices in grounded theory.

5.2 Observations

Results from the observations made at 13 different meetings provided a supplemental picture to the data collected during interviews. 28 hours of observations were made at meetings held across Charlotte. Table 8 summarizes the location of meetings that were observed.

Table 7: Location of Observations

Location	Number of Meetings
Uptown	6
West	5
North	1
South	1

At each meeting, notes were taken about topics being discussed, by who, and in what manner. The observation guide used at each meeting is included in Appendix C. Points of conflict and agreement were noted. Aside from the content of the meeting, dynamics in the room were also noted. This includes notes such as how many people are present, how the meetings are led, the body language and perceived attitudes of individuals, interactions between people, and seating arrangements. Notes from all 13 meetings were also uploaded to NVivo 12. After each meeting, notes were organized to differentiate between topics discussed /language used, and observations related to meeting dynamics. Meeting notes were coded and a word cloud query was performed. Figure 11 is the resulting word cloud results from the observation meeting notes. The word cloud highlights several words that represent topics widely discussed. While many of these words were used in several different ways, as an observer I can point to some words listed that were consistently discussed in the same ways. Placing these words in context, these topics include:

1. Creating a **just** education system and a **just** city
2. Complex **task** at hand; Work of a **task** force
3. **State** (NC) context, **state** policies, Raleigh power
4. Wants of **people**, rights of **people**, what **people** deserve

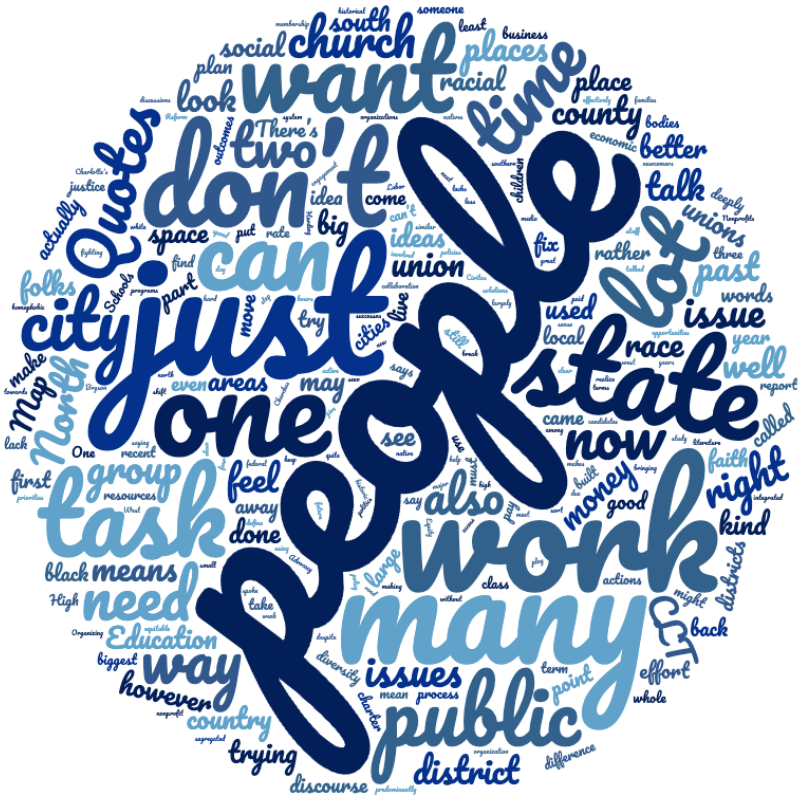


Figure 13: Observation Word Cloud

While the word cloud represents notes transcribed related to the topics discussed and language used by individuals present, other findings emerge from the notes taken about meeting dynamics. Table 9 summarizes key findings from all meetings attended.

Table 8: Observation Findings

Observations
At board meetings, community members come to speak and then leave soon after
At board meetings a series of comments are usually organized by one individual / organization
At board meetings, the environment is controlled enough to avoid major conflict
Equity is discussed with passion and emotion across all settings
Often the most vocal participants are native Charlotteans, how do we know? Because they will say so
In most settings, aside from organizing meetings, conversation is one directional. In that, one or a few people talk and the rest listen. In organizing meetings, there is more discussion and conversation.
Conflicts most likely to arise between parents and district administration. This most commonly looks like parents advising administration they are not performing their job duties.
Few conflicts between parents
Few conflicts between administrators
Most collaboration identified between faith houses. Coalitions around education are mostly comprised of different faith leaders.
Little cross-school collaboration. Parents collaborate with other parents who's children attend the same school. There is little evidence of collaboration amongst different schools in same area.

Most meetings were relatively structured with an agenda. However, the board meetings were the most structured, with a specified period for public comment. PTO/PTA meetings were also fairly structured, although not nearly as formal. Faith meetings and organizing meetings were loosely structured, however there were 1-2 identified goals for each meeting. Few conflicts arose during the meetings, and the ones that did were quickly de-escalated. Conflicts were primarily focused around school assignment and allocation of school funding.

5.3 Discourse Analysis

In the preliminary phases of the research, approximately 260 documents were analyzed. From these documents, names of potential interviewees, organizations, and topics of discussion around education in Charlotte were identified. Near the end of the

research process, an additional 40 articles were added to the discourse analysis, as new avenues of exploration emerged. This process is in line with grounded theory methodology. All texts were uploaded into NVivo 12 for analysis.

Texts were coded line by line, but also as a whole. For example, one document might be coded for its source, year, and main topic. However, each document was reviewed line by line and coded as necessary. Preliminary codes were of three types, a) location within Charlotte-Mecklenburg, b) stakeholders involved, and c) main issue/topic. Following interviews and observations, the articles were again analyzed for codes. A fourth type of code was added that covered "tactics being used". Several queries were run to continue identifying major themes. Once all texts were coded, a word frequency query was done. The twenty most frequently used words in order are listed in Table 10.

Table 9: Word Frequency in Discourse

Word Frequency	
1. school	11. force
2. Charlotte	12. public
3. student	13. year
4. meeting	14. students
5. board	15. children
6. community	16. teachers
7. Mecklenburg	17. parents
8. high	18. news
9. ask	19. district
10. education	20. support

There are several stand-out words on this list. Words that stand out include: community, board, task, force, news, and support to name a few. It is also helpful to get a picture of how frequent these words are used in a weighted sense. Figure 15 is a word cloud representation of the most frequently used words weighted according to frequency.

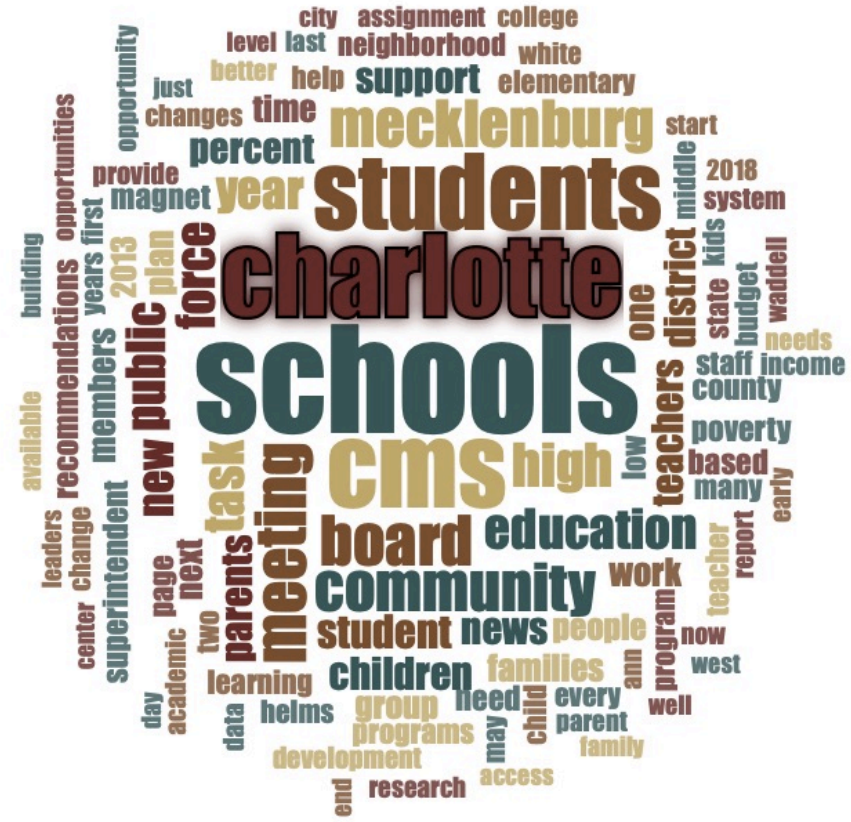


Figure 14: Discourse Word Cloud

With both the frequency table and the word cloud, some ideas about key points of conversation within the texts begin to emerge.

The words alone do not tell the whole story. It is important to consider them in context. What is the meaning behind these words when they are used? How does the

meaning vary depending on who is using them. Questions around this remain, however there are insights that can be taken from the analysis conducted.

1. The term community is used vary broadly by media and individuals.
2. Parents/teachers and the district are often discussed in binary terms.
3. There is frequent stating of issues, but rarely are implications of these problems discussed.

When the media are discussing education issues in Charlotte, and they discuss "community", it is typically in reference to the city as a whole. In other circles, "community" would be associated with a neighborhood or group of individuals most directly impacted by an issue. For example, the Charlotte Observer quotes former Superintendent Clark as saying "We are a community of juxtaposition, a community of dichotomy" (Helms, 2016). Another article from the Charlotte Observer states "the school assignment plan riveted the community for two years, and now it becomes reality" (Helms, 2018). In both instances, community is implied to mean the city. This is stark contrast to a Facebook exchange where individuals discuss lack of community input. A resident writes "Nobody came to talk to the community. We have monthly neighborhood meetings, where the community gathers to discuss important issues, and CMS has never come" (quoted from Faceboook, 2018). This discrepancy highlights how to some CMS has engaged community, while to others it has left out community voice. This discrepancy seems to be due to a disconnect about what community actually means.

In many articles, parents and teachers are often portrayed as being in alignment and agreement about challenges facing the district. However these views are often discussed as being at odds with the views of district administration. Whether this binary actually exists is uncertain. Many articles about district challenges include sentences that

follow a similar structure. Sentences often go something like "Parents and teachers insist that _____, but district officials _____." For example, "On Tuesday night, parents joined by some teachers called for stronger emphasis on neighborhood schools, however Tom Tate who works on the policy team for CMS said it was too early to take options off the table" (Helms and Harrison, 2017). Another example states, " [The CMS] budget proposal will land on school board members' laps amid rising alarm and activism among parents and teachers" (Lowe, 2018).

When performing a discourse analysis, it is also important to take stock of words and messages that are notably absent. Ideas missing from texts can signify voices that are silenced as well as "participants that strategically claim they have been silenced" (Taylor, 2016). Missing sentiments can also be the result of suppression to support a dominant discourse in attempts to suggest an absence of alternatives. Using grounded theory methodology and my own personal experiences in Charlotte, there are a few key ideas that appear missing from the texts in relation to education.

While there are countless articles about disparities within CMS there is no real discussion about what those disparities look like each day. For example, articles will state that schools are under-funded or under-performing. However, discussion rarely goes deeper. What does an under-funded school look like? What kind of outcomes do low-performing students achieve? Conversely, what opportunities are afforded students at adequately funded schools? Without a clear picture of a "successful" school, it is hard for the every day Charlottean to get an accurate picture of just how much some schools are struggling. Disparities are not problematic for their own sake. What do the evident disparities do to children and their families? To the city as a whole? These are questions completely ignored in the documents I analyzed.

Similarly, the voices heard in the texts were limited to a small few, over and over again. Very often interviewees were CMS officials, stand-out teachers, one or two active parents, and non-profit executive leadership. In the documents analyzed, there is no clear discussion of what different communities across Charlotte are looking for in the school system. There are blanket statements made like "poor communities", however this assumes that all low-income communities have the same needs. Similarly, when disparities are discussed, equal opportunities for "all children" are mentioned. However, in many articles there is a conflation with equity and equality. This undermines the unique needs of many children of color within an education system rooted in institutionalized racism.

5.4 Network Analysis

Following each semi-structured interview, participants were asked to use the network analysis tool (included in Appendix D) to provide additional data about connections. The connections revealed in the network analysis complemented data gathered using other means throughout this research project. Participants often completed the network analysis tool on their own, needing little clarification. Most participants offered 3-7 connections. The average number of connections stated was 4.7. Because interviewees gave only a few connections, the assumption was made that the connections given were the most salient. For this reason, connections were not weighted in terms of "strength" of relationship. In total, 114 unique nodes were collected. Of the total number collected, 73 nodes were used in the network analysis. 41 nodes were not used in the network analysis because they were statewide or national organizations. For

the purposes of this study, I limited nodes to those based locally. Table 11 highlights the types of organizations included in the network analysis.

Table 10: Types of Organizations in Network Analysis

Type	Number
University	2
Task Force	1
School	21
Nonprofit	7
Government	4
Health	2
Faith	14
District	1
Corporate	3
Community	18
TOTAL	**73**

It is important to note that the tool originally separated connections based on whether they were positive or negative connections. However, after the second participant completed the form, it was stated that this aspect of the tool was problematic. The participant stated that relationships evolved over time, and that a connection that was once positive was now negative. Given this insight, the network analysis aimed to only gather connections and did not typify them in a binary way. This changed the nature of the resulting network, however the data still provides important insights. Figure16 highlights the connections between the 73 nodes. Between the 73 nodes, there are 143 connections. Figure 16 is a screenshot taken from an Excel file that was used to organize all connections between nodes to then import to ArcGIS. While I am certain

	A	B	C	D	E	G	H	I	J	K
1	Point A	Name	Type	Point B	Connection	Line Number	XPoint	Ypoint	Xend	Yend
2	1	Ardrey Kell High	School	59	Board of Education	1	-80.826585	35.028241	-80.8412	35.220218
3	1	Ardrey Kell High	School	7	Community House School	2	-80.826585	35.028241	-80.823666	35.035315
4	1	Ardrey Kell High	School	21	JM Robinson	3	-80.826585	35.028241	-80.785494	35.065993
5	1	Ardrey Kell High	School	60	Providence Estates HOA	4	-80.826585	35.028241	-80.722966	35.064814
6	1	Ardrey Kell High	School	43	Stone Creek Ranch HOA	5	-80.826585	35.028241	-80.777775	35.044637
7	3	Bruns Academy	School	59	Board of Education	6	-80.86503	35.23947	-80.8412	35.220218
8	3	Bruns Academy	School	80	HWEP	7	-80.86503	35.23947	-80.86503	35.23947
9	4	Butler High	School	59	Board of Education	8	-80.694024	35.120447	-80.8412	35.220218
10	7	Community House School	School	59	Board of Education	9	-80.823666	35.035315	-80.8412	35.220218
11	7	Community House School	School	21	JM Robinson	10	-80.823666	35.035315	-80.785494	35.065993
12	7	Community House School	School	60	Providence Estates HOA	11	-80.823666	35.035315	-80.722966	35.064814
13	7	Community House School	School	43	Stone Creek Ranch HOA	12	-80.823666	35.035315	-80.777775	35.044637
14	8	Dilworth	Community	59	Board of Education	13	-80.86503	35.23947	-80.8412	35.220218
15	8	Dilworth	Community	62	Cotswold	14	-80.86503	35.23947	-80.80381	35.17814
16	8	Dilworth	Community	40	Sedgefield Neighborhood Association	15	-80.86503	35.23947	-80.834663	35.188113

Figure 15 : Network Nodes and Connections

this is not a completely comprehensive network, it provides a basis for understanding this particular moment in time.

With all the connections mapped, a few findings become clear. First, the center of the connections is very clearly Uptown. Connections are most dense in center city. Resources and decision making power are concentrated in Uptown, so it is not surprising that this part of the city plays an important role in this network. The network map also reaffirms findings from the discourse analysis. Organized groups collaborating with one another were mentioned in both West and South Charlotte. These sub-networks show clearly on the map.

Preliminary findings around this suggest that West Charlotte has people power rallied around the low-performance of area schools as a result of education disparities. In South Charlotte, both people and financial power are rallied around protecting the well performing schools the area has come to be known for. These groups were both observed to be the most active in board meetings, where these sentiments were expressed. There is some activity within the suburbs to the north and to the south of Charlotte, however grassroots groups were difficult to identify. The key players in these areas were town staff, charter schools, and places of worship. It is uncertain whether activity is limited to individuals, or if there are active groups I was unable to discover.

Notably lacking in activity on this map are areas in north Charlotte and east Charlotte. These are areas sparsely discussed in the discourse. Few people representing these areas were observed in all meetings. There are two potential explanations for this that come to mind. First, East Charlotte tends to have the highest concentrations of immigrants and refugees (Singer, Hardwick, and Bretell, 2008). It is possible that some of these residents are undocumented or not yet accustomed to American school systems. If this is the case, it is understandable why creating or participating in a community group or conversation would be unlikely. In North Charlotte, many of the area schools are neither failing or receiving A grades. Instead, they are average, middle of the line schools according to the state report card. It is possible that without the abysmal outcomes to fight against, and the extraordinary outcome to protect, there is little motivation to be active. More research is needed to explore these ideas.

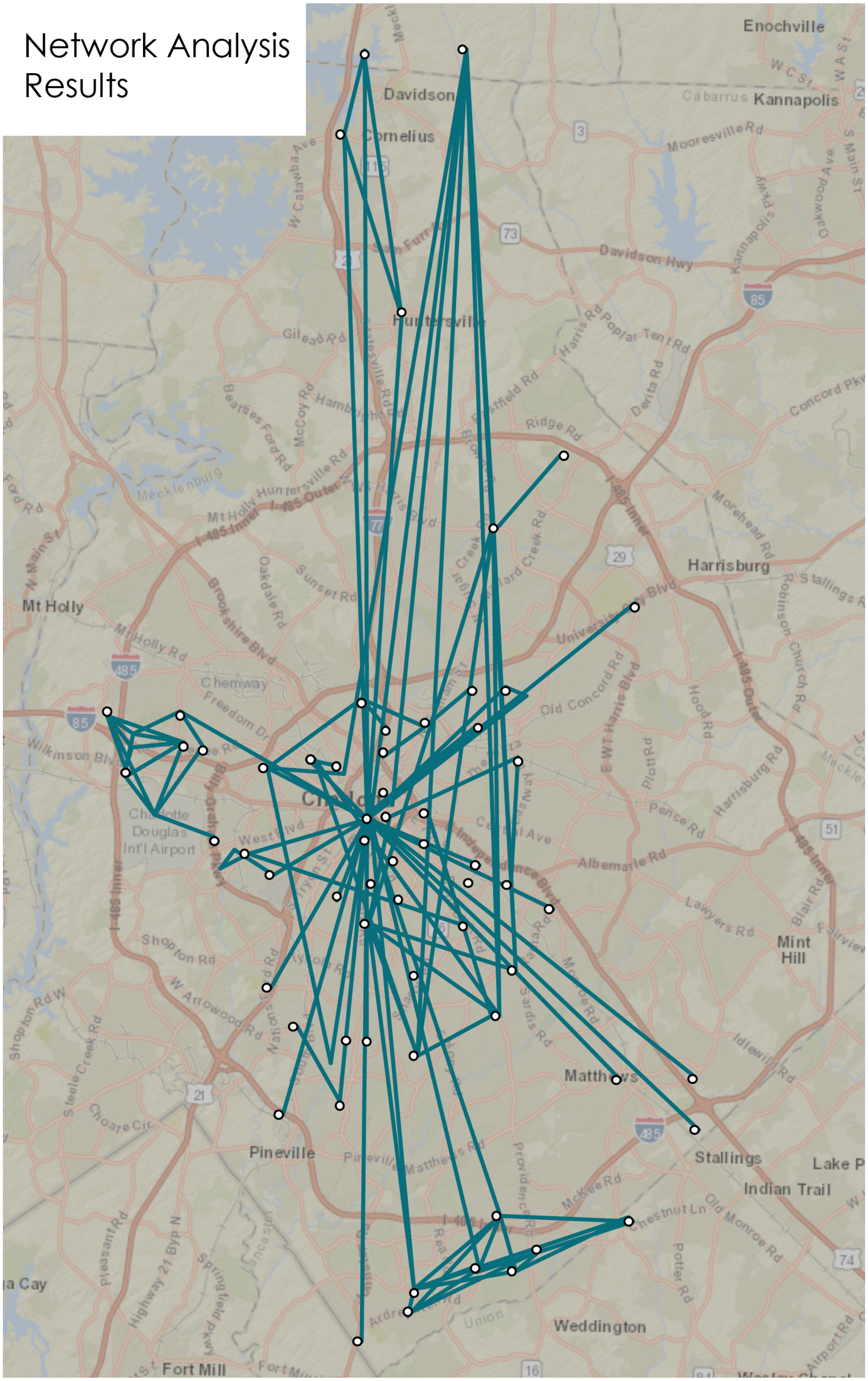


Figure 16: Network Analysis Results

5.5 Putting It All Together

The previous sub sections report findings from each individual method used in this research project. The purpose of using multiple methods is to triangulate data to gather strong evidence when attempting to answer the research questions.

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

From the multiple methods used in this study, I have identified several key findings. These findings are directly related the original research questions outlined. This section describes these findings along with the supporting evidence from the multiple avenues of data collection.

There are three key findings relevant to the first research question:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?

One of the first key findings to emerge from the research is that all groups regardless of geography, position, or role **seek to work in collaboration** with CMS and the school board. This is opposed to an antagonistic relationship that can often develop. For example, many communities have extremely tense relationships with Chicago Public Schools, resulting in strikes, sit-ins, public arguments, name-calling, protests, and rallies (Watkins, 2005). However, this is not the case in Charlotte. The few protests that do emerge are peaceful and are in the spirit of making the community voice heard. This is both observed when attending public meetings and highlighted in the

discourse time and time again. Examples from the discourse appear in articles covering the few protests that do happen. All instances of protests include descriptions such as "the demonstration remained peaceful", "the peaceful protest was to raise awareness for parent concerns…", "students and faculty plead for CMS to hear about the strengths of the school during a peaceful event planned for Monday", and "a peaceful protest was planned in efforts to encourage collaboration".

When pairing the findings from the interviews and the network analysis with the observations and discourse, a related insight presents itself. The **city center**, whether that be district administrators, nonprofits, or corporate headquarters, is often **the primary target of efforts**. That is, where stakeholders go to try to influence power structures. Many organizations and government offices are located in the city center. It is the geographic space where much of the visible displays of collective action take place. There is very little focus towards connecting with other groups nearby. This is most clearly reflected on Figure 17, which highlights the results of the network analysis. Most connections are from Uptown to another node in the crescent or wedge. There are very intra-crescent connections. This pattern holds true for the entire city, with the exception of South Charlotte communities just outside the I-485 loop.

Another major finding highlights **differences in approaches based on geographic location**. In South Charlotte, when an issue was raised to the school board or to the press, it was largely spearheaded by a parent and/or community member. For example, during a controversial plan for a new K-8 school in South Charlotte, many parents voiced their concerns during board meetings. However, in other parts of the city, issues raised to this level were often discussed by non-profit staff, clergy, or teachers. Very rarely were community residents visible as champions of the conversation. This is especially relevant given that nonprofit staff interviewees were more likely than other groups to focus on program development and expansion, rather than policy change. This was evident during observations. During board meetings, when community residents were present, they were there to support a spokesperson serving in some other role. The one exception to this was a community group in SW Charlotte. During interviews, when asked about their efforts, community residents were quick to point to partnerships with

nonprofits or faith leaders. This was less frequently brought up by community residents in South Charlotte.

Visible leadership varied between regions in Charlotte. However, irrespective of geographic location it is clear that **non-profits and church groups inform neighborhood efforts to improve schools**, as opposed to other way around. Nonprofit staff interviewees were also more likely to have a more explicit focus on poverty and socioeconomic status than race. A non-profit staff member stated "This is my job, to drive this work. I don't expect community members who have a full plate to take this on. I keep them in the loop and try to do the heavy lifting". All observations support this finding. Church leaders and non-profit staff were present at every school board meeting and accounted for much of the allotted public comment time period. Both faith leaders and nonprofit leadership sit on several CMS task forces. Some even serve as the task force chair. Observations and interviews shed some light as to why this might be. Nonprofits and churches are often the physical spaces for meetings, so their power often times comes in the form of space. By doing this, it is as though they automatically have a seat at the table. One participant highlights this point keenly when they stated "The churches play a lot of games, they will be either your ally or your opponent. They can make their space available for meetings and then suddenly pull it". Nonprofit spaces do the same.

The influence of churches and non-profits may also stem from other factors. Church members might volunteer at a school through the congregation and their service as adequate, with no desire to go do anything else for the schools. In this way, nonprofits and churches serve as a middle man between communities and the district. Many interviewees alluded to this during our conversation. One participant stated, "There's folks who are involved in supporting this cause because their church is, and I think that

momentum helps pull people in. People care about supporting the causes their church supports". Another individual shared that "The greatest allies so far as I knew it to be are the faith community. I know this church and many churches give backpacks back to schools. I know some of the members of the church members volunteer at the school frequently". Additionally, some feel they have no choice but to center nonprofits and churches. According to one participant "Project Lift was gifted so much money, that it was hard to take focus away from that for a while, so we had to develop an agenda that was inclusive of Project Lift".

Despite the influence of nonprofits and churches, **not all interviewees felt that the agendas of these organizations were positive for school improvement**. Interviewees from community organizations were the most commonly aligned with this view. Several participants suggested that nonprofits undermine community work. One participant stated it explicitly by saying, "Non-profits develop these programs which are great, but then it takes away from the urgency to get schools the funding they need, because these nonprofits are effectively trying to fill the gaps. But the issue with that is two fold, sustainability and accountability". Non-profits have the expertise, but can often forget to include the expertise of neighborhoods. For example, "Nonprofits bring their plans to us, and then we give feedback. I wish we could bring our plans to them and they back it with their resources".

Several other participants derided the influence of churches. According to one interviewee, "[This church] has a large footprint in Charlotte, they're incredibly homophobic and racist, which to me is not related to equity or the best student outcomes. So, that's like one that they, they were deliberately manipulating candidates too, in ways that were homophobic and harmful. They work closely with members of the school board

and will successfully delay votes on important matters. So we find ourselves having to try to react to that instead of moving our own agenda forward". Participants expressed frustration that church leaders play a large role in conversations around equity but represent congregations in areas historically anti-equity. Frustrated, one person said "Churches are here playing a critical role in equity conversation, however these agendas they push are not representative of the congregation. Many of these large wealthy churches in South Charlotte have social justice ministries and are on task forces, but the people there on Sunday would argue our agendas all day long".

Regarding the second research question, an additional three findings emerged. The second research question is:

2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?

Community and neighborhood driven efforts have not been successful at implementing policy changes at the district level. However, community and **neighborhood groups have experienced success in school level changes.** For example, community groups have a track record of preventing school closures. This finding emerged during the interviews and the discourse analysis. Several articles highlight the efforts of parents and communities to protect Harding High School and Waddell Language Academy. When asked about their most significant wins, many participants reflected on preventing school closures. For example, one participant stated "Our community really rallied around our neighborhood schools, probably for a variety of reasons. There's history there. We have so much taken from us, losing a school was too much. The momentum fizzled out after the school was removed from the closure list, but those few months were busy".

While community driven efforts have been limited in their impact, **nonprofit and government funded initiatives have been successfully piloted, funded and implemented**. Examples of these include Project Lift, Renaissance West Steam Academy, Communities In Schools, and Read Charlotte. While these programs have been successful at starting and running their programs, it is **unclear that outcomes have been profound enough to move the needle on major educational disparities**. One interviewee touches on this when she says

> The education challenges in Charlotte are not something we can program our way out of. There needs to be systemic policy changes, however, we support these non-profits, which is great, but then we see them as the whole solution. They really can't have true success without pairing these programs with policy changes.

It is possible that community driven groups have not been as successful at acquiring funding and beginning programs because of the strong non-profit presence. More research is needed to explore the relationship between these two findings.

In attempts to answer the third research question, four interrelated findings materialized. The third research question asks:

3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?

To begin to understand the Charlotte context, I first asked participants about the importance of the Southern context in general. The resounding response from most participants was that **being in the South did have a notable impact.** This sentiment was echoed in the discourse as well. Many articles alluded to the importance of Jim Crow and race relations unique to the South. However, there was disagreement as to whether the impact was positive or negative. Ultimately, the data suggest that the Southern context does have an impact, with both pros and cons.

Interviewees of color were the most likely to see the South as having a negative impact on education reform efforts. White interviewees tended to see it as more of a positive. Of the benefits of being in the South, some alluded to the "in your face" history present. For example, "people in the South have a consciousness about race, they don't have this colorblind mentality as much as when you go to other parts of the country. Due to what has happened here, it's harder to say race isn't a factor so that is a positive". Similarly, another interviewee stated:

> If you're in Charlotte, they're quite a few who attended some kind of integrated school of some kind, schools in the past, if they're of that generation, if you're between the age of like 30 and 50, you've had, if you went to public school, you had some kind of desegregated schooling at some point. So at least people in this age range can at least envision that, as opposed to people outside of the South.

In Charlotte, the term "New South" is often used. In several texts analyzed, this term was used suggesting its relevance. Smardz writes in the Washington Post:

> For those of you just stepping into our city, we should explain that Charlotte is a different kind of South. It's definitely not the Old South, for better or worse, and while it might be the New South, we're not sure anyone has quite figured out exactly what that means. (p. 2)

Large districts common in Southern states, were also seen as a benefit. One interviewee said, "We have large county based districts, rather than city sized districts like in other parts of the country. So, our districts are more diverse, even if our schools aren't".

The downfalls of being in the South were also related to historical context. One participant stated "In the South there is deeply ingrained institutional racism, that has a stronger hold than perhaps other places". Others discussed the dangers of the South. "The racism that we do see can feel more violent and threatening. It can be scary to be a person of color advocating for change".

In addition, the South's lack of history with labor unions has had a lasting impact. Currently, North Carolina has the lowest union membership rate in the country (Johnson, 2019). Someone not from Charlotte highlighted this, "So much of organizing is borrowed from labor union work, but when I came here and realized those references were largely lost on people, we had to spend a lot of time just creating buy-in for the power of organizing". Similarly, an interviewee stated:

> On a logical level, I think that we know organizing works, but seeing is believing, here there hasn't been a whole lot of seeing. The successes from organizing seem to be the exception. Once you do something and it works, it tends to stick around. We haven't had a whole lot to point to as "look this worked!" like maybe other cities have.

North Carolina teachers are not unionized, so according to one participant, "even to them it is not hugely familiar like it is in other states. So, getting teachers on board has been possible, but we have to define and explain first".

The idea of **the "Charlotte Way" and the strong impact of this on local efforts** came up time and time again in observations, interviews, and texts. Respondents of all races touched on the Charlotte way influence. However, younger interviewees (18-24) did not bring it up nearly as much as their older counterparts. What exactly is the Charlotte Way? That is harder to define. All of the data collected during this project provide clues as to what the Charlotte Way really is. However, based on the feedback from participants, it can be described by gatekeeping and the tendency to be polite and passive despite deep conflicts and tensions. Another way to think of it would be to picture two individuals on opposing sides of a debate, with intense dislike for the other. However, to anyone observing, they would appear to be the best of friends. Figure 15 is a screenshot of someone discussing the Charlotte Way on social media. The screenshot is a portion of

a public disagreement about a university co-opting a community driven event. This pattern of co-opting is also considered part of the "Charlotte Way".

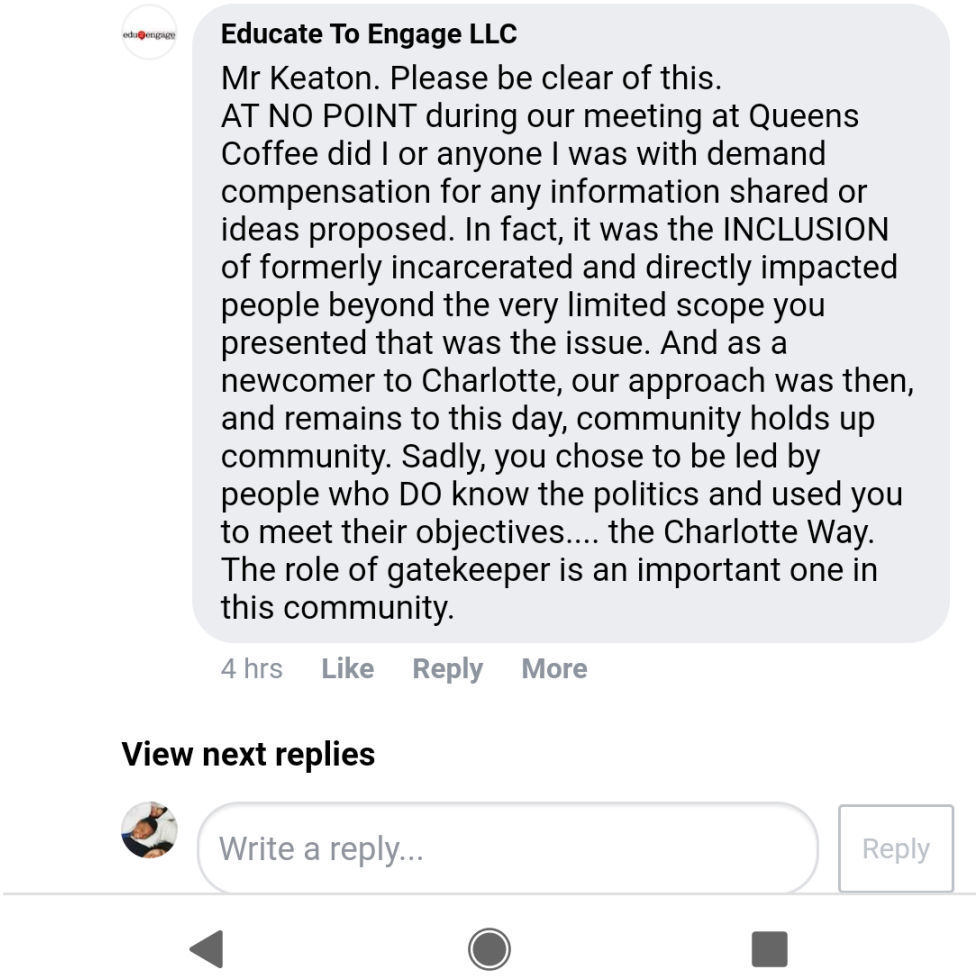


Figure 17: Screenshot of Social Media Conversation

Perhaps a symptom of the Charlotte Way, data suggests that the city's reputation for in-fighting amongst groups with similar causes is warranted. There is evidence to support the perception of infighting amongst people with common goals, however a comparative study is needed. Observations supported this lack of collaboration. Many of the meetings I attended included duplication of efforts around similar goals, but rarely

were the various groups involved in communication with one another. Specific to education, One Charlotte and One Meck are a prime example of this lack of collaboration. Several interviewees discussed the rift between these two groups:

> The organization was called One Charlotte. The idea was one network supporting education in Charlotte. However, it failed because we only lasted a brief time, through one campaign. There was a lot of internal conflict with other groups. A lot of bickering, which is typical to happen in Charlotte. When we disbanded an organization emerged right after called One Meck. Instead of joining with us, it shifted power away from One Charlotte. We see that happen all the time with issues, but nothing ever gets done.

This sentiment was echoed over and over again. "There's such limited funding, and rarely one key champion. It's just hard to keep people focused on collaboration". Another participant stated, "When we try to build coalitions, it goes well at first, but as soon as we try to shift to action things just sort of crumble". The media has picked up on this infighting as well. In an article the Charlotte Observer reads, "With the number of charter schools and private school vouchers growing, CMS can't afford a replay of the infighting that accompanied the 2014 exit of former superintendent Heath Morrison, or the chaos that swirled around the closing of 10 predominantly black campuses in 2010" (Charlotte Editorial Board, 2016).

Lastly, the **influx of newcomers into Charlotte has an impact on education improvement efforts**. The impacts of new arrivals are multifaceted. First, newcomers may not value desegregation as much as native Charlotteans. One native Charlotte resident highlights this:

> Talking to people who were educated elsewhere, they often have never been in an integrated school in environments that they literally can't picture, they don't have that vision or like the idea of what that could look like or the like, which is really limiting. It's not a priority to them.

Another participant stated, "To newcomers the current state of affairs is the norm, but people who have been here know we can do better". Regional migration has an impact on local history and memory. Many put the onus on CMS to showcase its history. "CMS has not made a strong enough effort to keep their history at the forefront. If they would have done that, they may have been able to keep from going backwards". Interviewees of color were more likely to see the influence of newcomers as a negative thing. White interviewees were more likely to be newcomers themselves. Interviewees native to Charlotte discussed the immense pride associated with integrating schools. This is pride that many newcomers are not familiar with. Newcomers might not have bad intentions, but perhaps that doesn't matter.

> People show up with good intentions and want to help make Charlotte better, but they don't know the history. They don't take time to hear stories and get to know the history, they just jump in. And before you know it, they have replicated mistakes, or stepped on the wrong toes.

These findings suggest that the impact of local context on education improvement and equity is significant.

Lastly, data was collected to try to answer the last research question:

4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

The answer to this question is not straightforward. However, this research did uncover insights about organizing in Charlotte. If asked, I think many people would be quick to say community organizing is being done in Charlotte on a fairly regular basis. However, after speaking with interviewees, observing several meetings, and analyzing texts, I argue it is not happening nearly as often as we might think. Specifically around education, there is a **confusion between organizing and advocacy**. At most school board meetings, there were many groups and speakers advocating on the behalf of others. There were very few examples of organized people leveraging their power as a collective. This is evident to many of the people I spoke to. The following quotes come from different participant interviews, but all align around the same idea. One participant stated, "People will feel like getting, getting interviewed by the news means something, or being a Facebook activist means something is getting done. They do those things and view themselves as an organizer. That is not organizing". Another interviewee reflected on this point saying, "Organizers, advocates, and activists are different. But people think they all the same. They often don't even know the difference".

More interviewees elaborated on this point. "If you make things happen but you don't include nobody else, that is not bringing community together. But people do that all the time, and pat themselves on the back". Yet another participant shared, "Advocacy is great, and needed at times. Because you bring spotlight to an issue. But organizing is actually building power and shifting the dynamic. It's called organizing because it's strategic". Finally, another thought shared was that, "There's a difference between saying our schools need more support versus saying I am going to do these three actions over three months to push our elected officials to give schools more support".

All these interview snippets lament the focus on advocacy, particularly when it is confused for organizing. While observing meetings, the only times community organizing was genuinely being done, it was accompanied by trainings about the organizing cycle (through the particular lens of the IAF). Organizing that does happen is place based, largely due to a mismatch of opinions on what the problems and solutions are. As mentioned earlier, successful (and not successful) organizing efforts centered around neighborhood schools and did not take up district or state level policies.

There is however one exception to the focus of organizing efforts. During the data collection phase of this project, there was a spike in organizing activity. Many people were frustrated by CMS's release of the *Breaking the Link Report*. This report highlighted disparities within the district. Angry as many people were, most of their emphasis was on fixing CMS through serving on task forces. This highlights the last major finding of this study. **Task forces and committees, the focus of much organizing and advocacy, are often used as an ends instead of a means**. One of the most entertaining quotes gathered during the interviews was focused on this phenomenon. The participant shouted, "You know in Charlotte they just love to task force you to death! To death!". This participant even showed me a funny drawing they found on the internet stating "Nothing better describes Charlotte!". Figure 19 is the image the participant showed me.

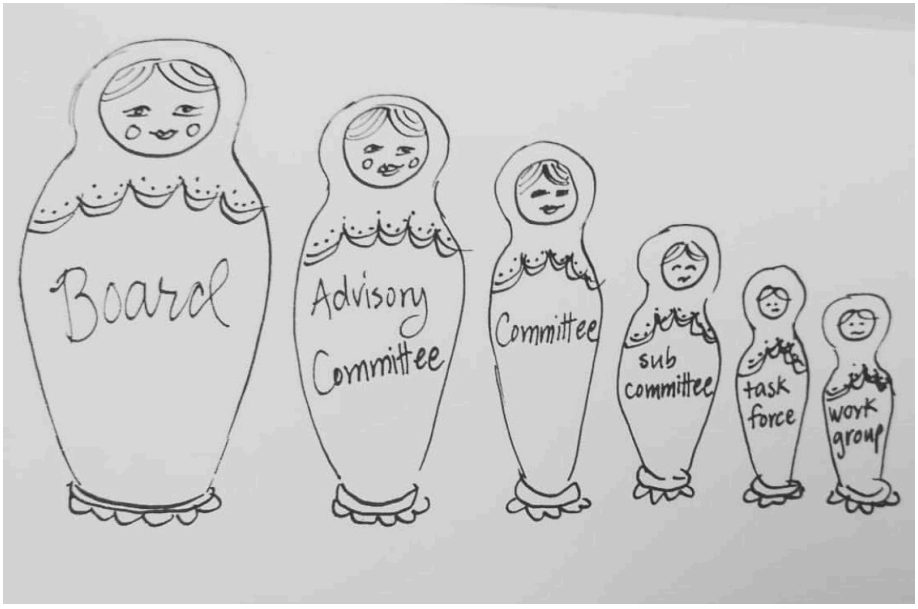


Figure 18 : Description of Charlotte from Participant

There is a seemingly endless amount of data to support this claim. An article in the Charlotte Business Journal writes "when community leaders unveiled a report summarizing two years of research into economic opportunity and upward mobility, they called on the community to support the CMS board in taking "bold and courageous" steps to reduce concentrations of school poverty. This bold and courageous step was an equity committee?". Of the board meetings I observed, so much time was spent discussing the more than 22 existing task forces, as well as the proposed new equity committee. Additionally, several interview participants touched on this fact.

> Well in Charlotte, there is a tendency to have studies and commissions and do lots of talking and not much gets done. People spend too much time getting involved in a study and then get burnt out and nothing happens. It's just a waste of time and energy.

Comments about task force and committee meetings were especially colorful. "You have the same 10-15 people on all the task forces, their whole week must just be task force

meetings. How is that going to produce any new ideas?" Another participant asked, "People point to the *Leading on Opportunity* report and the recommendations of the task force-- and what has that really done? Have outcomes really changed? "Similarly, other interviewees stated:

> We do a lot of talking and very little doing. We will have 100 task forces, and then you know maybe after 1 year we can agree on what the issue is, but then any suggested solutions are met with concerns or zero will.

> I don't know if it is the Southern hospitality thing or what, but my goodness. We've got the write out a process about how we're going to get people together to actually pick up that piece of paper as opposed to just going out there and picking that piece of paper.

> Other things that I've experienced is that we may have the meetings and you're trying to come up with a plan. Like you're trying to come up with a plan for youth. You have a meeting about if you should meet, then a meeting about what to do, then one about what you did, what you're doing and you're trying to figure out what you want to do and you're like, well this is what they want. But you haven't asked. They don't necessarily include the people who should be involved in decision making.

The tendency for Charlotte to defer to task forces and committees was a key finding that almost every interview participant agreed on.

Table 11: Key Findings

KEY FINDINGS
1. All groups regardless of geography, status, position, or role seek to work collaboratively with CMS and the school board.
2. The city center is the primary target of outreach efforts.
3. There are differences in how school improvement is approached by community groups based on geographic location within the city.
4. Nonprofits and church leaders inform neighborhood efforts to improve schools, rather than the other way around.
5. Not all grassroots groups agree with nonprofit and faith agendas for CMS.
6. Community and neighborhood driven efforts have not been successful at implementing policy changes at the district level. However, they have experienced success in school level changes.
7. Nonprofit and government funded initiatives have been successfully piloted, funded, and implemented at district and school level, however outcomes are unclear.
8. The southern context does have an impact on this work.
9. The nebulous concept of the "Charlotte Way" lingers throughout this work.
10. An influx of newcomers has an impact on education improvement efforts.
11. There is a deep rooted confusion between organizing and advocacy.
12. Task forces and committees are often the focus of much organizing and advocacy work; task forces used as an ends instead of a means.
13. Approaches to school improvement look similar to approaches to affordable housing.

Table 12 summarizes the key findings of this research project as discussed above. Discussing the results of the analysis and connecting the analysis back to the research questions may bring up more questions than answers, but many powerful insights were uncovered about approaches to school reform in Charlotte.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to begin to unpack how various stakeholders address education reform in Charlotte. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on community organizing, advocacy, and education justice. Implications for both theory and practice are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief project summary.

This chapter contains discussion and avenues for future research to help answer the research questions:

1. How do individuals/groups approach education change in Charlotte, North Carolina?
    a. How do status, geography, position, influence these approaches to change?
2. How successful have various approaches been at achieving their vision for improvement within CMS?
3. How does Charlotte's local context influence approaches to school improvement?
4. Is community organizing for educational justice being used in Charlotte? If so, how and to what end?

How different actors in Charlotte work towards improving schools and outcomes for children is multi-dimensional and highly context specific. This study has resulted in fourteen major key findings. However all of these findings can be categorized as being directly tied to at least one of the following themes: (a) power dynamics, (b) local history and memory, and (c) neoliberal governance. Some of the findings relate to just one of the aforementioned themes, or to all three. These three themes encapsulate all of the relevant findings from this study, and together best explain the environment around education

reform that is observed in Charlotte. These themes are dynamic, in that how they appear may shift or evolve over time, yet it is likely they will remain relevant to this conversation for the foreseeable future. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections. Table 12 summarizes the key findings of this study.

6.1 Power Dynamics

This study suggests that the degree to which groups organize, disrupt the status quo, or influence policy change is directly tied to local power dynamics. Whether groups feel empowered or disempowered impacts how education reform is addressed. However, power and powerlessness are not binary, and instead exist on an ever shifting spectrum (Tew, 2006). For example, the data imply that groups in West Charlotte and South Charlotte feel empowered to differing degrees, both in general and relative to specific topics. However, it appears that all groups, regardless of geographic position, view CMS as being the main source of power. All groups regardless of geography, status, position, or role seek to work collaboratively with CMS and the school board. Adversarial approaches are virtually non-existent across the city. A few documented exceptions are noted specific to school closures. However, generally, groups seek to work in partnership with CMS and the school board to make progress on their given issue. School reform efforts are largely adversarial and tense in places like Chicago and New York City, but this is not the case in Charlotte (Anderson, 2006; Watkins, 2005).

Typically when attempting to change a system, efforts are focused on identifying allies and fostering partnerships. Partnerships could emerge between groups with common interests. However, this study suggests that the city center is the primary target of outreach efforts. There is less focus on recruiting new people or groups to support

existing efforts. Instead, a group or individual emerges with a concern, and subsequently convenes on Uptown, creating a larger number of smaller groups. This pattern might explain the tendency towards "infighting" that was mentioned many times throughout this research project. The city center emerged as a target for many groups, suggesting it is a nexus of power in the eyes of many.

If the district is seen as the most powerful player, the suburbs and South Charlotte community group are runner ups. There are clearly differences in how school improvement is approached by community groups based on geographic location within the city. South Charlotte residents are not approached nearly as often by nonprofits and researchers. There, what power is established, stays with community residents. In other parts of Charlotte where disparities are evident and tangible, this is not the case. Often, various agencies are engaging communities and involved in the conversations. The data suggest this fosters an imbalance in power dynamics between organizations and community residents in the crescent, West Charlotte specifically. In those neighborhoods, nonprofit staff members or other agency leaders are more visible than most community residents. With community residents being less visible in marginalized communities, their influence over the narrative of their schools is less. This cooption, even if unintended, is one reason why some are opposed to the heavy involvement of nonprofit and faith leaders in school reform efforts.

Community and neighborhood driven efforts have not been successful at implementing policy changes at the district level. However, they have experienced success in school level changes. Their power is much more concentrated and visible at the neighborhood level, making school level change much more feasible. Many nonprofit agencies are likely to focus on district level initiatives rather than school-specific

happenings. This is likely to be a key factor in why communities have more power at the school level. For example, many interviewees spoke about having success in removing an underperforming principal or adding a school-wide program. When it comes to structural changes backed by policy, communities don't have the same level of influence.

Community influence is often limited to participation on task forces and committees. Task forces and committees are often the focus of much organizing and advocacy work; particularly of nonprofit leaders, faith leaders, and a select few community leaders. Task forces rarely result in tangible change as evidenced by CMS's 22 task forces with few positive outcomes to highlight. Task forces can be used as a tool to engage people without making any real shift in power dynamics. Similarly, they signal the coming of concrete actions, but in Charlotte they are often used as an end instead of a mean. Task forces have historically quieted accusations of inaction, without disrupting the status quo.

Communities have the potential to influence change without the help of institutions, however it is certainly more difficult to go at it alone. Fortunately, a recent shift towards community building has prompted institutions and agencies to strive for more frequent collaboration. While this increased collaboration is a step in the right direction, agency leaders frequently find it difficult to contend with differences in style and notions of power (Rothman and Zald, 1985). The education landscape is no different. The unequal power dynamics have made a visible impact on how and who influences education policy in Charlotte.

6.2 Local History & Memory

Local Charlotte media and residents alike continuously discuss the city's booming population growth. Approximately 100 people move to Charlotte per day (Portillo, 2016). This population trend has been continuing for several years. New subdivisions were built overnight, rents continue to rise in many areas, and the real estate market is buzzing with activity. With these newcomers, come new students into the CMS system, as well as new ideas about the future direction of the district. Many of these families come from other parts of the country, where school systems operate and look very different. These newcomers settle in Charlotte's suburbs within Mecklenburg County or purchase homes in newly developed areas. In West Charlotte, many residents are Charlotte natives with deep ties to the community. More and more, residents are being displaced by rising housing costs as young professionals seek housing near Uptown. Many of these newcomers to these old neighborhoods don't have children yet. Their voice is not as loud, for right now. However, in other parts of Charlotte newly arrived families buy homes specifically for the nearby schools, and their voice is loud. With the rapid changes happening within neighborhoods, it is not surprising to learn that efforts around education reform are closely linked with efforts around affordable housing (both for and against it).

The differences between Charlotte natives and new Charlotteans are many. However, the differences are especially prevalent in discussions around education. Both Charlotte natives and newcomers feel the impact of the South on the district. The long memory and institutional memory influence the perceptions of Charlotte natives. The lack of this also shapes how newcomers approach system change in the district. These differences are relevant to almost every aspect of school improvement in CMS, from

school assignment and segregation to school closure and school safety. The differences in approach to school reform can partly be connected to this local memory, or lack thereof.

There is also the "Charlotte Way" to contend with. Charlotte natives may not know how to define it, but they know how to navigate it. Newcomers arrive, often confused, oblivious, or intimidated by the "Charlotte Way". An ignorance to the way things are "done here", can lead to conflict, lack of effectiveness, or lack of trust. Conflicts and lack of trust make it difficult to forge strong partnerships. This contributes to infighting and isolation of groups operating in silos. The mixture of old-school respect and a passive aggressive style with a strong tendency to prioritize relationships can make genuine collaboration difficult. Disrupting the status quo can also prove challenging in a context that values mainstays and is skeptical of newcomers. An influx of newcomers certain of their ideas, unsure of how to navigate the Charlotte norms combined with skeptical natives with immense local pride is a recipe for conflict and stagnation.

6.3 Neoliberal Governance

Education reform is deeply intertwined with political and economic interests. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federally mandates that all children receive a free and appropriate education. However, cities are increasingly seeing a gap between less than appropriate educations being given to poor students, and exceptional educations being given to students of privilege. As districts grapple with closing these disparities, their funding remains stagnant, or in decline. In typical neoliberal fashion, corporations, faith houses, and nonprofit organizations are welcomed as they bring resources to try to fill the gaps. Typical funding support is directed towards a myriad of programs such as "teaching corps programs, pedagogic experimentation in school

districts, education reform advocacy organizations, and non-profit and for-profit charter management organizations" (Mitchell and Lizotte, 2016, p.4). These programs don't fundamentally address system wide shortcomings that require structural solutions. Many of these programs are in fact aimed at deregulating and privatizing the public schooling "market"". Programs are often laser focused on "failing schools". With these programs is an underlying assumption that individuals and teachers are at fault.

Focusing on individuals rather than the system at large is perpetuated by organizations who partner with CMS to create programs that are not complemented with structural change. This is a major reason why not all grassroots groups agree with the role nonprofits, corporations and faith leaders currently play. Some community leaders feel organizations take money away from schools who could benefit most from additional unrestricted dollars. Others feel they coopt community efforts. As mentioned, community and neighborhood driven efforts have not been successful at implementing policy changes at the district level. Yet, nonprofit and government funded initiatives have been successfully piloted, funded, and implemented at a variety of scales, despite lacking proof of meaningful outcomes. Communities attempting to find funding for radical organizing struggle, while groups with a focus on programming or advocacy find it much easier to secure resources.

The district is historically slow to act on issues of equity, safety, or teacher support. However, once the issue becomes a controversy and threatens the city's image or reputation, action is swiftly taken. What is often the first public action? To create a task force or committee. It can be argued that the purpose of these task forces is not to bring about tangible change, but to mitigate economic and political damage. This sheds light about why task forces are often started but produce no results. Similarly, the outcomes

that facilitate more spatial justice may not be for altruistic purposes, but instead driven by neoliberal agendas.

6.4 Connecting To Theory And Practice

Chapter 2 included descriptions for several approaches to community change, including several models of community organizing. These models included social action organizing, civic organizing, consensus building, transformative organizing, feminist organizing, advocacy, education and outreach, and social planning. How the approaches to change found in this study align with these models are discussed in the following section. The desires of many interviewees aligned with goals of transformative and social action methods. Despite this, in practice collective action around education reform in Charlotte is a hybrid of social planning, civic organizing, and advocacy with an undercurrent of faith and religion. Change is largely institutionalized, incremental, and programmatic. I call this hybrid approach towards collective change "accommodating action".

This is not to say people don't get upset, that emotions don't rise, or conflict doesn't occur. However, this study suggests that people largely utilize institutionalized channels, prefer collaboration, and accept incremental concessions that can spark changes without ruffling too many feathers. Accommodating action also captures the southern hospitality, politeness, and restrained emotions that I so often saw during this project. People will share their opinions, but not in such dramatic ways that alienate others. The accommodating action model is inspired by transformative organizing and social action with tactics pulled from social planning, advocacy, and civic organizing.

Social Action

Social action is based on building and shifting power through conflict, confrontation, direct action, and negotiation. There were several participants who identified building power as a key goal, however no participants discussed use of social action tactics. While the goals of the social action model align with the goals identified by interviewees, there was no alignment with the methods used. On the ground work in Charlotte does not reflect social action methods, yet often does reflect the desired outcomes associated with social action.

Civic Organizing

Civic organizing is based on goals of social integration and social order. This is done through both formal and informal channels, led by formal organizations that are not necessarily community led. As a result, residents are connected to systems of government and have a clear understanding of how to navigate institutional systems. This model often relies on leveraging complaints and urging changes through institutionalized channels (ex: formal complaint processes, elections, etc.).

While participants did not express sentiments aligned with priorities of social order, the methods used by many interviewees align with civic organizing. Many interviewees discussed filing complaints with the district, speaking at school board meetings, sharing their perspectives during periods of public comment, and supporting specific candidates in school board elections. Nonprofit organizations and faith groups often act as facilitators. Organizations work to rally groups of people to navigate these systems in support of a common goal. Groups may have goals aligned with other models

of change, but typically display practices aligned with civic organizing. From civic organizing, some groups transition into social planning practices.

Consensus Building

Consensus building is rooted in the power of partnerships and collaborations as a result of mutual interests. As a result of the consensus, this model is associated with tangible results. A key finding of this study highlighted the lack of collaboration. This project suggests that there is an inability for many groups to even communicate to explore if consensus might be feasible. While tangible results are desired by virtually everyone interviewed, there is not alignment between on the ground practice and this theory of change.

Transformative Organizing

Transformative organizing is intended to radically restructure power dynamics and shift paradigms. This approach is characterized by its use of popular education, critical thinking, and resident run organizations. It can be argued that interviewees played critical roles in pushing the equity conversation to the forefront for CMS. However, the result of these conversations has not resulted in changes in existing power structures. Many resident leaders that were interviewed expressed thoughts about change that align with transformative organizing. However, the similarities have not yet led to transformative organizing being put into practice. It is possible that the conversations around transformative practice are the first step towards implementation.

Feminist Organizing

The issue of education is closely aligned to other issues around family, parenting, and private home life. At many of the CMS board meetings, public comments came from distressed mothers who discussed the impact of education on their child and family.

In this way, some issues lend themselves much easier to the feminist theory of change, rooted in connecting private experiences of women and families to public issues. However, the other characteristics of feminist organizing are not widely prevalent. While many programs currently in place aim to have a family focus, they are not highly inclusive. Similarly, the efforts currently underway by community groups, parents, teachers, churches, and nonprofits are not modeling shared leadership, mutual support, or shared decision making. Instead, agendas are typically set by a core group of leaders within an organization. There is also the nuanced difference between equality and equity. There is not a unified or intentional focus in Charlotte to focus on one over the other at this moment in time, as there is a tendency to conflate the two.

Social Planning and Policy

Social planning and policy emphasizes a technical process of problem solving regarding complex social issues. This approach is data-driven and leads with empirical objectivity. Community participation is not a core ingredient. Change is often seen as a complex process that requires expert input. There is heavy reliance on needs assessments, decision analysis, and designs of formal plans and frameworks. The focus is task goals: conceptualizing, selecting, establishing, arranging, and delivering goods and services. There is not a focus on shifting power or altering the status quo. Avoiding duplication, and filling gaps in services are important concerns. The many task forces used by CMS are hallmark of social planning. This theory of change is very similar to the findings of this study, with a few key differences.

Social planning and policy is the dominant system used by nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and CMS. This is not the preferred mode for

resident led groups. However, a finding of this research highlighted the fact that all groups find value in partnership and collaboration with organizations with power. Power, whether in the form of decision making, financial, or influence, is critical for community groups. The desire to partner with organizations perceived to wield these types of power makes logical sense. Community groups have a desire to have a seat at the table, so they tend to conform to the social planning and policy approach. Many interviewees discussed theories of change in line with other modes of change. However, in an attempt to work within the existing system they end up shifting to civic change methods or practice aligned with social planning and policy. Civic change and social planning are closely aligned and complementary. They both rely on navigating within existing systems.

Advocacy

Advocacy is often a group or organization that cares about a problem pleading on behalf of another group directly affected by a problem. Many organizations and agencies take on this role in Charlotte. While nonprofit staff members or senior church leaders may not be directly impacted by CMS policies, they are dedicated to the issue on behalf of the residents they serve. Individuals and groups not directly impacted by the local education system advocate on behalf of those who are, and also facilitate civic organizing. Service provision is also common in Charlotte, however there is not evidence that it is facilitating any change. Figure 16 summarizes the disconnect between goals expressed by interviewees contrasted with the current practices utilized as evidenced by the data from this study.

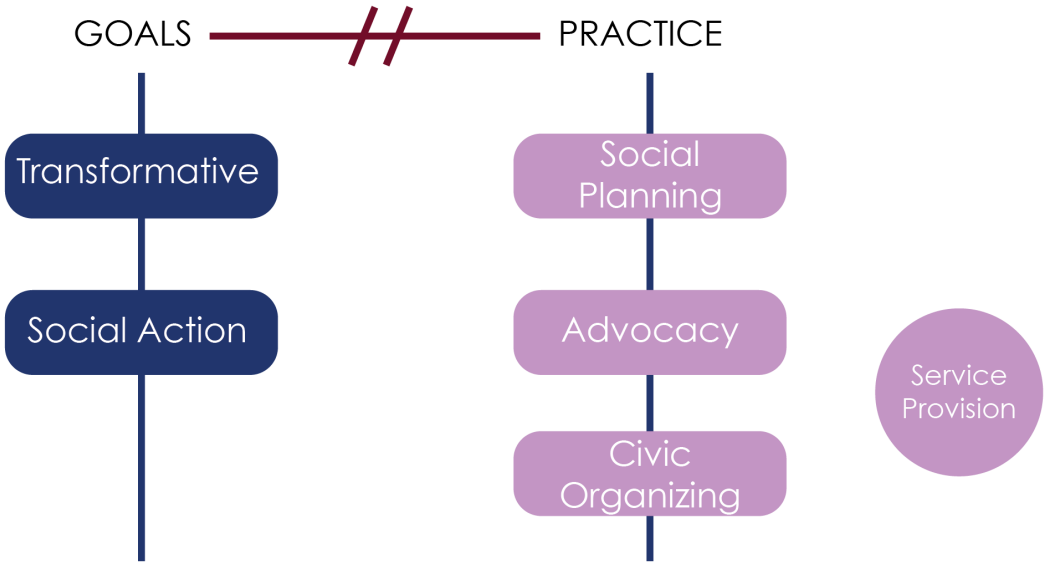


Figure 19: Disconnect between Goals and Practice in Approaches to Change in Charlotte

Practice

` A desire to work within existing power structures and systems may be undermining community groups efforts to disrupt the status quo. For groups aiming to maintain their exceptional schools, navigating the current system works well. However, for groups aiming to redistribute resources, tackle disparities, and foster equity, the civic, social planning, and advocacy approaches have produced little results.

Participants often shared desires to build power, confront systems of institutionalized racism, reallocate funding, and change policy around charter schools. Many of these goals would be better aligned with other approaches to change, such as transformative organizing or social action. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations, agencies, and other institutions may still be productive, if groups can resist confirming to social planning practices. Groups might see results by pressuring agencies to conform

instead, and practice methods beyond conventional avenues if they are met with resistance.

This study suggests that collaboration between groups, both within neighborhoods and between neighborhoods, is a challenge. The collective action that does take place is often place based around a specific school. Community groups might consider how collaboration across the city might impact their work. Approaching education as an issue based organizing topic, rather than place based, may yield different results.

This study also highlights the different perspectives of those who have lived in Charlotte all their lives, and those who are new to the area. When community residents aim to collaborate this study suggests it would be worthwhile to spend time discussing local history and context to help ensure similar frames of reference for all involved. Differences of opinion will always exist, but this may reduce conflicts between groups. Agency staff that are tasked to work with community groups might also include local history as part of their initial training and background work before making contact with communities. Furthermore, once professionals do connect with communities, they should continue to being open to narratives and histories shared by residents.

Faith leaders, funders, and nonprofit staff clearly have influence over the work of community groups. This study highlights the need for increased accountability of these professionals to community groups. Clear methods to measure outcomes and impacts should be included in all partnerships between organizations and communities.

6.5 Spatial Justice?

The intention of this research project was to ground education reform and collective action in space, and to provide a critical analysis of if/how communities are

interrupting patterns of spatial injustice. Existing spatial justice literature continually highlights one important point: geographic space is an important component in producing justice relations, yet some of the most interesting and important questions remain unanswered. Empirical studies have documented factors influencing patterns of geographic injustice. However, very few studies have focused on how communities attempt to disrupt patterns of spatial injustice.

Findings in this study have highlighted how education issues in Charlotte have typically been addressed as place based issue. However, these place based efforts have not been successful at interrupting patterns of spatial injustice in meaningful ways. Improvements have been made incrementally. However, changes to the current spatial distribution of resources and power have not drastically changed.

Social relationships influence spatial dynamics and vice versa. This study has documented how social relationships between communities of different demographics, status, and power dynamics are sparse. This is especially true in gentrifying spaces where schools have historically experienced poor performance. Neighborhood changes alter existing social relationships and power structures. There is a disconnect between newcomers and established residents. Overall, there is a lack of communication and collaboration between stakeholders of different backgrounds.

This lack of communication makes it difficult for communities to share information about how resources are allocated, how student experiences differ, and how district actions vary from place to place. It is hard to interrupt patterns of spatial injustice, without a clear understanding of what benefits over resourced areas are receiving. In other words, it can be hard for marginalized communities to articulate inequities if they don't have a clear picture of just how much other schools are thriving.

This begs the question, how do you encourage stakeholders of well resourced schools to communicate and collaborate with marginalized communities? Stakeholders of high performing schools will need to be persuaded to consider how the quality of all schools impacts the city's economic success, competitiveness, and long term future. High performing schools currently experience challenges with overcrowding. As more and more newcomers arrive to Charlotte, they naturally are drawn to areas with great schools. The overcrowding problems become exacerbated. However, equitable support of all schools to reach their full potential alleviates some of this pressure. With this reframing, stakeholders may begin to care about all students not out of altruism, but out of their own self interest. With increased collaboration between education advocates of all shapes and sizes, there is an opportunity for increased pressure on the district to be accountable for positive student outcomes.

Although it seems counterintuitive, this study suggests that an issue based approach to education may encourage an infrastructure of collective action that is more effective at disrupting patterns of spatial injustice. However, before this is possible, place based efforts must be robust and organized, before collaboration between groups is attempted.

6.6 Limitations And Future Research

I believe that qualitative research was the right choice for this study. Qualitative research tools, such as interviews, are not designed to capture hard facts, but instead are able to take the pulse of a sample group around a particular topic. It is possible that more credibility could be given to this study if a mixed methods approach was used. For example, a survey designed for quantitative research, and subsequent statistical analysis,

may offer more evidence to strengthen the data discovered using qualitative research tools. However, the nuanced findings uncovered through qualitative methods in this particular study would be hard to reduce to numerical data.

During this research project, many individuals agreed to be interviewed. The snowball sample suggested that I had exhausted potential interviewees. There is one individual who was referred to me time and time again, but declined to participate. His perspective would have undoubtedly enriched this project, and perhaps led to additional interviews. I am certain there are additional individuals who would have important insights to add who were not uncovered.

It was difficult for me to find interview participants from East Charlotte. East Charlotte has higher concentrations of Latinx and immigrant populations. Reaching these populations without established connections is often very difficult for various reasons. Immigrant communities often face unique challenges in many aspects of life, including in school. Important insights from this population are missing due to their low representation in this study. Lack of participants from this part of the city is a limitation of this study.

Additionally, there were meetings relevant to the topic of education in Charlotte that I could not attend. Another weakness of the research, is that participants switched back and forth between talking from their own perspective and that of the group/organization they were affiliated with. For the purposes of this study, I did not attempt to differentiate between the two. Lastly, as a relative new-comer to Charlotte, it is possible that similar to study participants, there are important historical moments or incidents that occurred that were not discovered during the data collection phase of this study and that I remain unaware of.

There are many additional avenues to explore following this study. Mitchell and Lizotte (2016), discuss the many pilot programs tested out in low-income schools. Future research might take a closer look at the various programs taking place in CMS schools operated by third party organizations. A comparative study might examine how these programs differ from those in well performing schools in affluent parts of the city.

This study was grounded in Charlotte, NC and focused specifically on education. Further research might compare the education landscape in Charlotte to that of another Southern city, or even a city in a different region of the country. Similarly, this study could be replicated around other social issues such as housing, food security, health, crime, and/or environmental justice. As more studies examine approaches to these other issues in Charlotte, we would get closer to a rich and deep understanding of how community driven change happens within the city.

6.7 Conclusion

This study identified three main factors influencing approaches to change in Charlotte. These factors include: (a) power dynamics, (b) local history and memory, and (c) neoliberal governance. As a result of these factors, civic organizing, social planning, and advocacy are they dominant approaches to change in Charlotte. These approaches to change don't clearly align with the desired outcomes expressed by many study participants. Significant effort and energy are being expended by marginalized communities into practices that don't clearly yield results, including education and spatial justice.

We are in a time where research on topics of justice and community driven change are especially needed. Inequality across several quality of life indicators is ever

widening, particularly in cities. Education continues to be a promising avenue for closing gaps. However, disparities suggest the promising power of an education is not equal for all. This is also true in Charlotte. Communities and groups of all kinds are attempting to deal with the many challenges facing our local education system. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is unclear. This study is the first step in attempting to unpack the many players and theories of change at play. To begin to understand how communities can be more effective at fostering beneficial change, we must first understand what practices are currently being utilized. Education of our children is too important of an issue to leave to chance. Intentionality is key. Until the Charlotte community aligns tactics and practices to desired outcomes, challenges within CMS will persist.

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Appendix A: Analysis Codebook

Location	Activity	Leadership	Age	Topic
East	Neighborhood Meeting	Single community resident	Youth and Young Adults (Under 23)	Segregation
West	Task force or committee	Many community residents	Adults (24+)	Safety and Crime
South	Protest (rally, march, etc.)	Local Govt		School Assignment
North	Boycott	Nonprofit Organization		Charter Schools
Uptown	Testimony	University		School Leadership
Multiple Areas	Research	Business		Funding and Bonds
Suburbs	Public Comment	Church		High Stakes Testing
		Coalition		Racial Disparity
				Special Education
				Overcrowding
				Busing

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Questions

1. Are you originally from Charlotte? If not, where are you from?

2. How long have you been working towards improving CMS schools?

3. Do you consider yourself a community organizer? If so, formally or informally?

4. How many hours per week do you devote to this work?

Organizing Tactics

5. In your perspective, describe a "win" that resulted from collective action and/or organizing? What did it take to get there, who was involved, what tactics were used?

6. From your perspective, describe a "loss" that resulted despite collective action and/or organizing? What tactics were used and who was involved?

7. Specifically related to your efforts with CMS, what does success look like for you and your allies?

Spatiality of Organizing

8. Who do you think are your biggest allies? Where are they located?

9. Who do you think are your biggest adversaries? Where are they located?

10. What kinds of places do you do the majority of your organizing work?

11. In what ways and where do you think you have made an impact through your work?

Charlotte Context

12. What role does religion play in your work, if at all?

13. How do you think being in the South influences your work, if at all?

14. What kinds of tactics do you think work best in Charlotte?

15. What kinds of tactics do you think often fail in Charlotte?

16. What are the most rewarding parts of doing this work in Charlotte?

17. What are the most challenging aspects of doing this work in Charlotte?

18. How do you think collective action in Charlotte unique?

Demographic information to be collected:

Age Neighborhood/Region of City Race Education Gender

Appendix C: Observation Guide

Community Organizing Tactics

1. How are members interacting with one another?
2. How are they interacting with me?
3. How are they interacting with professionals?
4. What are the defining features of the group dynamic?
5. How are group dynamics influencing meeting outcomes/agenda items?
6. What is the level of participation of each member?
7. Is there evidence of shared leadership?
8. How is conflict addressed and/or resolved?
9. Does each member have a clearly defined role or niche?
10. How are individual skills identified and applied?
11. How is knowledge being translated into action?
12. How are new voices incorporated?
13. What are the objectives of the meeting? Of the group?
14. How is conflict handled/addressed?
15. Is faith evoked?
16. What body language are people displaying?

Spatiality of Organizing

17. What geography is the focus of the meeting? Neighborhood, city, state? Other?
18. Is there evidence of information sharing? With who?
19. What kind of space is the meeting located in?
20. How are different plans, behaviors, attitudes framed?
21. What local issues are addressed?
22. What adversaries are identified? Where?
23. What allies are identified? Where?

Charlotte Context

24. What historical events are referenced if any?
25. What visions for the future are identified, if any?

Appendix D: Network Analysis Instrument
Instrument adapted from Provan et al. (2005).

List below any organizations in Charlotte that you are connected to when reflecting on your work to improve Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). These relationships can be positive or negative. Please describe how you interact with each organization you list.

Types of interactions include exchange of information, shared resources (joint funding, shared equipment or personnel, shared facilities, etc.), shared membership between your organization and the agency listed, or shared outcome/impact (you feel that the wins and losses of the group influence/impact those of your own group). They could also be an adversary, opposition group, or a group that has formed after leaving your group. Types of interactions are not limited to those just described. You may write on the back or request additional forms if needed. Thank you!

Name:

Type of Relationship:

Name:

Type of Relationship:

Name:

Type of Relationship:

Name:

Type of Relationship:

Name:

Type of Relationship:

Appendix E: Revised Interview Questions

1. What are the goals of the work that you do?
2. If you had to give advice to a newcomer to Charlotte trying to improve local schools what would you say?
3. How do you go about sharing your grievances about the state of our schools?
4. Do you or have you had a child in CMS?
5. What groups or individuals do you think are the best at spreading the word about education related issues/topics?