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By

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Abstract

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The charter school movement "has always been an ideologically big tent," incorporating schools framed by conservative market and progressive democratic tenets (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010, p. 539). However, the charter school movement has become increasingly aligned with the market values of accountability, choice, efficiency, and privatization, hence crowding out the democratic and progressive aims of charter schooling (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Wells, 2002). Scholars have explained the rapid proliferation of market-oriented charter schools, such as those affiliated with charter management organizations (CMOs), by demonstrating their robust levels of political and financial support from an array of advocacy groups, intermediary organizations, and foundations (DeBray, Scott, Lubienski, & Jabbar, 2014; McGuinn, 2012; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). Yet little research has investigated how independent charter schools unaffiliated with CMOs and founded upon progressive pedagogical and political missions mobilize the political, financial, and ideological support needed to thrive in a market-oriented policy context.

In this qualitative comparative case study, framed by the empirical literature on what charter schools do, have, and know to survive, I examined how three independent charter schools in New York City garnered political, financial, and ideological support to maintain their founding progressive missions and remain in operation. New York City was an ideal site in which to conduct this dissertation, because despite rapid CMO growth in the last 2 decades, independent charter schools constituted 40% of the charter sector (New York City Charter School Center, 2017). I spent 10 months interviewing a total of 44 founders, school leaders, board trustees, and advocates of the three focal schools; and conducting approximately 50 hours of observations of school community and advocacy events, to understand how these schools engaged various constituencies to mobilize support for their schools when disproportionate support flows to CMOs and other market-oriented charters. I also explored what actors and organizations constituted the supportive political and financial coalitions of independent charter schools, and the impact of charter leaders' mobilization efforts on their framing of what constitutes equitable, inclusive, and democratic education.

Findings reveal that schools each experienced various challenges to garnering support for their founding missions, illustrating the difficulties inherent in instituting progressive schooling in an educational environment deeply informed by market principles. Indeed, competitive market and accountability pressures compelled each school to adapt to the market context to maintain

legitimacy, garner resources, and survive organizationally. Specifically, schools adjusted both their internal organizational structures regarding curriculum and instruction; and their external activities related to political advocacy, community engagement, and fundraising. For example, across schools, leaders incorporated test preparation into the curriculum, contradicting their original progressive pedagogical aims, as they perceived test scores to matter not only to securing charter renewal, but also to attracting prospective families, donors, and the political support of elected officials. Such practices compromised schools' missions to advance equitable access to experiential, inquiry-based learning experiences for poor students and students of color. As schools adapted and evolved, school leaders redefined what it means to be progressive, shaping their notions of progressivism to what is possible in a market-based educational context.

Extending the argument that the basic "grammar," or instructional and organizational routines, of schooling is resistant to change (Tyack & Tobin, 1994), this study demonstrates how ubiquitous market values create another grammar of schooling, organizing schools around the logic of the market. In adhering to a market-based grammar of schooling, schools enact practices and acquire resources that advance their survival in the competitive market, sometimes at the expense of their progressive pedagogical and political missions.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Exploring the Possibilities for Progressive Public Education in New York City

"Charter schools are, on the one hand, fragmented and decentered localized projects that celebrate difference over uniformity and fight for cultural recognition, and, on the other, are conceptualized within and connected to larger global trends of less redistribution and more privatization, greater inequality between the rich and the poor, and of increased commodification of culture via images of mass marketing."
—Amy Stuart Wells, Alejandra Lopez, Janelle Scott, and Jennifer Jellison Holme (1999), "Charter Schools as Postmodern Paradox," p. 174

A 1995 *New York Times* article about the Hudson School, a small, alternative public school in New York City, described a "sense of freedom" among teachers.[1] The article noted the many ways Hudson differed from "conventional city schools" where teachers often adhered to "rigid schoolwide lesson plans" and where large class sizes often prevented teachers and students from developing meaningful relationships. At Hudson, teachers worked with the same students over 2 or 3 years, getting to know what excited and motivated them and designing interactive learning experiences to meet their academic needs and interests. Located in one of New York City's most racially, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse immigrant neighborhoods, Hudson was designed to foster a close-knit school community. To achieve this aim, students of mixed ages and skills learned together, rather than in distinct academic tracts, and cooperative group work was common across classrooms. The collaborative community extended to Hudson's faculty, who would meet almost daily to share lesson plans, problem-solve, and celebrate successes. Teachers interviewed for the article described some challenges at Hudson, given the enormous workload involved in constantly experimenting and crafting original lessons rather than implementing a curriculum off the shelf. Yet all teachers also noted the fulfillment and joy derived from being part of a village-like community and creating intentional academic experiences for their diverse students.

The Hudson idea emerged in 1992, when a group of about a dozen public school educators in New York City encountered an announcement from New Visions School Projects, a nonprofit organization partnering with the City's Board of Education to create small public schools. Together with the Annenberg Foundation, New Visions solicited proposals for innovative public school models for which it would provide start-up funding through so-called "Challenge Grants." The group of educators, unfulfilled by their work at traditional public schools, had been meeting on evenings and weekends to discuss how to improve public education.[2] They dreamed of schools that empowered teachers to design inquiry-based lessons in place of rote curricula, encouraged collaboration and community-building, and offered ongoing opportunities for professional growth. The New Visions grant was as a chance to turn their ideas into reality. They applied for a Challenge Grant, won one of the 16 coveted awards, and opened the Hudson School in 1993.

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[1] All informant and school names in this study are pseudonyms.
[2] Unless otherwise specified, throughout this study, I use the term "traditional public school" to refer to a public school that is not a public charter school.

In 1999, Hudson's leaders and educators encountered another opportunity. New York State had just passed the Charter Schools Act, which allowed teachers, parents, and community members to open and manage public schools that would be publicly funded, yet exempt from many state and district regulations (New York State Charter Schools Act, 1998). Hudson's leaders were attracted to the possibility of converting to charter school status, which they believed would afford them greater autonomy to institute their inquiry-based curriculum and collaborative leadership model, as well as to experiment with other pedagogical and governance approaches. The New York City Board of Education invited several traditional public schools to a meeting to discuss the option of converting to charter status, and when Hudson was not invited, its school leaders "just crashed the meeting," according to the current school principal, Jolene Agee. Jolene explained, "We were the perfect school to convert, because [we'd] have more autonomy… We wanted autonomy. We felt that would actually support student achievement."

The prospect of autonomy that had attracted Hudson's leadership team was one of the central tenets of the charter school movement at its inception in Minnesota in 1991. In theory, charter schools are autonomous from most state and district regulations so that they can experiment with innovative instructional and organizational approaches. In this way, for their progressive advocates, charters were intended to animate local participatory democracy, enabling teachers, families, and communities to envision and create schools that reflected local needs and preferences (Budde, 1988). Furthermore, as "laboratories of innovation," the charter school movement was intended to share effective practices with traditional public schools (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). Many of the earliest charter schools leveraged their autonomy by orienting their curricula and governance models around progressive educational, social, or political missions (Henig, Holyoke, Brown, & Lacireno-Paquet, 2005; Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holme, 1999). For example, some charter schools were ethnocentric by design, intended to expand educational opportunity for communities of color historically underserved by the traditional public school system (Fox & Buchanan, 2014; Wilson, 2016). Wilson (2016) argues that ethnocentric charter schools can operate as politically-empowering spaces for communities of color long marginalized and oppressed by the institution of public education. Other charter schools partnered with local civic groups to serve the educational needs of poor, immigrant, or non-English speaking communities (Rofes & Stulberg, 2004). As Lipman (2011) explains, the emergence of some early charter schools "is a powerful indication of the desire of communities and progressive educators to take education into their own hands" in light of "persistent failures of public schools to provide equitable, meaningful education," especially in urban areas (p. 121).

Simultaneously, education reformers animated by conservative and libertarian ideology saw charter schools as a mechanism for advancing school choice and the privatization of public education. Drawing from libertarian thinkers such as Milton Friedman (1962), who critiqued the "government monopoly" on schooling, reformers and policymakers argued that public sector institutions such as public schools were inherently inefficient. These reformers called for policies to deregulate education and facilitate a "marketplace" of educational options in order to improve efficiency and advance equity through parental choice. Throughout the 1990s, this market-oriented logic gained support from across the political party spectrum and came to define the charter school movement, obscuring charters' progressive and equity-oriented possibilities (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Wells, 2002). As Wells (2002) notes, "Advocates of [the free-market] view [were] the most active and organized at the political and policymaking level in terms of influencing the scope of charter school legislation" (p. 9).

Beginning in the early 1990s, for-profit education management organizations (EMOs) exemplified the marketized version of charter schooling. EMOs contracted with urban school districts to operate charter schools, centralizing operations across multiple charters in order to achieve efficiency and economies of scale (Bracey, 2003). By 2002, EMOs operated an estimated 10 to 20 percent of all charter schools in the nation (Wells, 2002). However, it was soon clear that many EMOs prioritized profits over education. Numerous school districts, including New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, ultimately terminated their contracts with EMOs such as Edison Schools and Education Alternatives, Inc., due to these organizations' fiscal mismanagement and poor academic performance (Bracey, 2003; Orr, 1999). In subsequent years, the for-profit EMO sector declined in growth (Miron & Gulosino, 2013).

As EMOs decreased in number, nonprofit charter management organizations (CMO) rapidly expanded (Farrell, Wohlstetter, & Smith, 2012). Similar to EMOs, CMOs centralize operations across multiple schools to maximize efficiency. Unlike EMOs, however, CMOs, as nonprofit organizations, are not pressured to generate profits for shareholders. Furthermore, CMOs are more likely to prioritize academic accountability, as these organizations are designed to scale up the charter sector rapidly by replicating schools with demonstrated records of academic achievement (Farrell et al., 2012; Huerta & Zuckerman, 2009; Quinn, Oelberger, & Meyerson, 2016). Aspire Public Schools, recognized as the first CMO in the nation, began in 1998 when career educator Don Shalvey partnered with entrepreneur and philanthropist Reed Hastings to transform Shalvey's independent charter school into a charter network designed to replicate schools rapidly (Quinn et al., 2016). To achieve economies of scale, Aspire standardized instructional and operational structures across its network schools, a common practice among CMOs today (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). Indeed, scholars have argued that the consistency across CMO schools resembles the organizational models and replicability of commercial retail chains (White, 2018). By 2016, over one-quarter of charter schools nationally were operated by a CMO (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016). In some urban school districts, including Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Chicago, CMOs comprise more than one-third of the local charter school sector (Lake, Dusseault, Bowen, Demeritt, & Hill, 2010). Researchers attribute rapid CMO growth to the large numbers of politically powerful education policymakers, philanthropists, and advocates who support CMOs as an efficient approach to "scaling up" the charter school sector (DeBray, Scott, Lubienski, & Jabbar, 2014; Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009).

As CMOs manage growing numbers of charter schools, it is easy to overlook the so-called homegrown, "mom-and-pop," or independent charter schools that continue to emerge and exist: schools such as Hudson, which has enjoyed charter status for nearly 20 years, as well as independent charters that were founded more recently. However, these schools warrant attention because they represent attempts by educators and communities to advance progressive, equitable, and democratic schooling in a market-oriented political and policy context. As Wells argues (2002), the most politically powerful charter school advocates advance "a narrow set of interests": interests aligned with the market tenets of accountability, choice, efficiency, and privatization (p. 178). This narrow policy approach fails to address longstanding community advocacy efforts for racially- and socially-just public education, nor does it situate charter schools within a broad equity-oriented agenda that advances equitable resource distribution, racial integration, inclusive education for students with special needs, and opportunities for stakeholder participation in democratic governance (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010; Scott, 2011; Wells, 2002). However, against this policy backdrop, progressive educators and

community stakeholders continue to leverage the charter school model to achieve equitable, inclusive, and democratic schooling.

This study sheds light on independent charter schools and how they garner political, financial, and ideological support to maintain their founding missions to institute progressive, equitable, and democratic education. I conducted an in-depth examination of three independent charters in New York City: Empire, Hudson, and Liberty Charter Schools, which represent a range of charters founded between 4 and 20 years ago. I spent 10 months interviewing the founders, school leaders, board trustees, and advocates of each school, and observing numerous school community and advocacy events, to understand how these schools engaged with various constituencies to mobilize support when disproportionate support flows to CMOs. As the charter school movement becomes increasingly aligned with the market values of accountability, choice, competition, individual achievement, efficiency and economies of scale, I examined how charters that were founded upon progressive pedagogical and political aims continued to emerge and survive, and how the market context impacted their efforts to garner political, financial, and ideological support. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do independent charter schools build support for and maintain their founding progressive missions in a policy context that favors a market-oriented charter school model?
    a. How do independent charter schools mobilize *political* support for their founding progressive missions and continued operation?
    b. How do independent schools mobilize *financial* support for their founding progressive missions and continued operation?
2. What actors and organizations constitute the supportive political and financial coalitions of independent charter schools?
3. How do charter schools' political and financial resource mobilization activities shape their framing of what constitutes equitable, inclusive, and democratic education?

As I will discuss, Empire, Hudson, and Liberty each experienced various challenges to mobilizing political, financial, and ideological support for their founding missions, illustrating the challenges inherent in instituting progressive schooling in an educational environment deeply informed by market principles. Indeed, competitive market pressures compelled each school to adapt to the market context to maintain legitimacy, garner resources, and survive organizationally. Schools adjusted both their internal organizational structures regarding curriculum and instruction; and their external activities related to political advocacy, community engagement, and fundraising. For example, across schools, leaders incorporated test preparation into the curriculum, contradicting their original progressive pedagogical aims, as they perceived test scores to matter not only to secure charter renewal, but also to attracting prospective families, donors, and the political support of elected officials. Such practices compromised schools' missions to advance equitable access to experiential, inquiry-based learning experiences for poor students and students of color. These, and other, compromises had potential impacts beyond the school-level, reinforcing inequitable conditions across the broader school district.

As schools adapted and evolved, school leaders redefined what it means to be progressive, shaping their notions of progressivism to the parameters of the market. For instance, Hudson's founding progressive mission was to expand access to experiential, inquiry-based learning, but this mission may be at risk as Hudson pursues an expansion plan that may deepen

competition and inequitable access to educational opportunity. At Liberty, school leaders increasingly framed the school's sustainability theme in terms of organizational longevity in the competitive market, departing from a definition of sustainability grounded in caring for all people and living things. Finally, at Empire, school leaders and board trustees increasingly subscribed to a narrow view of progressivism that neglected to address how advancing Empire's competitive position in the market exacerbated inequitable education across the broader community.

Tyack and Tobin (1994) argue that the basic "grammar," or instructional and organizational routines, of schooling is resistant to change, "so well established that it is typically taken for granted as just the way schools are" (p. 454). Much as "grammar organizes meaning in language," they argue, the grammar of schooling organizes widely-accepted meanings of what constitutes a legitimate school (p. 454). This study extends Tyack and Tobin's argument, demonstrating how ubiquitous market values create another grammar of schooling, organizing schools around the logic of the market. In adhering to a market-based grammar of schooling, schools enact practices and acquire resources that advance their survival in the competitive market, sometimes at the expense of their progressive pedagogical and political missions.

Part I: Framing the Study: The "Ideologically Big Tent" of Charter Schools

The Pedagogical and Political Goals of Progressive Education

The Progressive Movement in education emerged in the early 1900s against the backdrop of increasing industrialization, immigration, and urbanization in America. Progressive reformers were concerned with the preservation of democratic values amid such massive social change, and saw schools as a vehicle for facilitating democracy. At the forefront of progressive education was philosopher John Dewey, who called for called for pedagogical practices that would undo the individualism and materialism that he believed were undermining democratic life (Semel, 1999a). Dewey (1900/1990) argued that the school should operate as "a miniature community, an embryonic society," where children would learn the skills and habits of democratic citizens who act in responsibility to their community (p. 18). This, he maintained, stands in contrast to an education focused on advancing a child's individual achievement and social mobility. Lamenting the problems with most schooling, Dewey asserted, "this element of common and productive activity is absent," and he called for schools to operate as "a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons" (p. 14).

To foster democratic learning, Dewey (1900/1990) called for experiential, inquiry-based pedagogy, wherein teachers supported children's natural curiosities rather than imposing learning through direct instruction and rote memorization. As Semel (1999a) explains, Dewey's ideal of progressive education "proposed that educators start with the needs and interests of the child in the classroom, allow the child to participate in planning his or her course of study, advocated project method or group learning, and depended heavily upon experiential learning" (p. 6). As a form of experiential learning, Dewey advocated for providing children with occupations, such as cooking or woodworking, which would both contribute to the school community and serve as a gateway to meaningful engagement with academic subjects. Rather than the minimal student engagement and motivation undergirding teacher-led instruction, child-centered experiential learning, according to Dewey, "enables [the student] to see within his daily work all there is in it of large and human significance" (p. 24).

Throughout the twentieth century, educators and communities enacted Dewey's vision of progressive education outside the institution of state-sponsored public education (Forman, 2005; Semel, 1999a; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). For example, many of the earliest progressive schools were private and largely served an elite student population, largely due to the high cost of providing such an education (Semel, 1999a). Yet although Dewey was silent on the issue of racial equity (Semel, 1999a), many alternative public schools oriented around progressive pedagogy were founded explicitly as a means to expand quality schooling and political empowerment for communities of color historically underserved by the institution of public education. Extending Dewey's (1900/1990) call for schools to "[train] each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service," (p. 29), some progressive educators aimed to develop students' awareness and understanding of social inequalities within their communities and how to address them. In this way, progressive education came to take on explicitly political aims, in addition to pedagogical ones.

For example, in the summer of 1964, civil rights activists affiliated with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) established Freedom Schools in Mississippi in response to inadequate schooling conditions for Black children in the state (Forman, 2005; Perlstein, 2002). Volunteer teachers from SNCC and CORE instituted child-centered, inquiry-based pedagogy as a way to foster self-determination and empowerment among Black students (Perlstein, 2002). Mississippi's Freedom Schools inspired year-round "Free Schools," which emerged throughout the late 1960s and 1970s largely in the North, in response to what Free School advocates argued was a public school system that continually oppressed children of color. Similar to Freedom Schools, Free Schools centered on inquiry-based, justice-oriented pedagogy that incorporated studies of civil rights, the Vietnam War, and women's liberation (Forman, 2005). Both Freedom Schools and Free Schools were guided by the notion that small, self-governing schools, unfettered from the bureaucratic public school system, furthered the democratic aims of education (Kafka, 2008). Yet amid limited resources and support (Forman, 2005), and an increasingly conservative political climate that eschewed alternative approaches (Tyack & Tobin, 1994), Free Schools eventually dwindled and closed.

However, other alternative public schools guided by similar progressive and equity-oriented philosophies endure to this day, largely spurred on by policy and political support for small schools (Kafka, 2008). Among the most well-known are the Central Park East Schools in New York City, which serve poor communities of color residing in the surrounding neighborhood of East Harlem. Progressive educator Deborah Meier founded the first Central Park East Elementary School in 1974; a decade later, Central Park East included a second elementary school and a secondary school (Duckor & Perlstein, 2014; Kafka, 2008). Heavily influenced by John Dewey, Meier's schools are oriented around inquiry-based learning and problem solving as a means to developing students' democratic "habits of mind." Students prepare portfolios as multifaceted evidence of their learning and defend them before small faculty committees that occasionally include outside experts (Duckor & Perlstein, 2014). As Duckor and Perlstein (2014) explain, Central Park East "envisioned active, engaged learning as a prerequisite for a life of active, engaged democratic citizenship" (p. 12). In addition, Central Park East is grounded in an explicitly progressive political mission to "[foster] a culture of respect" for politically marginalized students, who often encounter "degrading, stultifying conditions" in traditional public schools (Duckor & Perlstein, 2014, pp. 23–24). Other examples of pedagogically progressive, alternative public schools serving poor students and students of color

include New York City's Urban Academy, established in 1985 (Raywid, 1999), and Boston's Mission Hill School, also founded by Deborah Meier in 1997 (D. Meier, personal communication, May 14, 2018). These schools each reflect Dewey's (1900/1990) call for inquiry-based, experiential learning as a vehicle for fostering students' skills and habits as citizens in a democratic society. They also each incorporate a progressive political goal to empower historically underserved communities.

Charter Schools as a Progressive Alternative to Traditional Public Schools

As Kafka (2008) describes, progressive, alternative public schools, such Central Park East, owe their existence to a market system that fosters the establishment of alternative schools of choice. The same market system supports progressive charter schools, whose lineage Forman (2005) traces to the Free Schools of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, similar to Free School advocates, many early charter school supporters sought more student-centered alternatives to a bureaucratic, oppressive, and politically disempowering public school system (Lipman, 2011; Wells et al., 1999). As Henig (2018) writes, charter school advocates, especially in the early years of the charter movement, were "animated by a pragmatic desire for a less rigid, bureaucratic, one-size-fits-all vision of public education, and a vision of collaborative school-based decision making in which both parents and teachers played critical roles" (p. 9). Many charter proponents sought to leverage the model's autonomy in order to institute progressive education for both pedagogical and political purposes.

For example, research from Rofes and Stulberg (2004) reveals examples of community-based charter schools that enact progressive, culturally-relevant pedagogy and facilitate democratic school governance in order to politically empower communities of color. In addition, many ethnocentric charter schools "are born of the frustration that parents and educators in marginalized communities often feel toward an education system that has failed to take their knowledge, their history, and their experiences seriously" (Wells et al., 1999, pp. 186–187). Wilson's (2016) case study of a Minneapolis charter school founded by and for the Somali immigrant community reveals how this school operated as a culturally-affirming space within the broader context of racial segregation, discrimination, and inequality. Wilson argues that, against the backdrop of an undemocratic society characterized by racial inequity, this ethnocentric charter served as a "counterpublic" space for members of a subordinated group to practice democratic engagement. Together, these community-based and ethnocentric charters reflect Dewey's (1900/1990) claim that schools should operate as "a miniature community, an embryonic society," where children engage and are valued as citizens in a democratic society, even when the broader society outside the school walls may not regard them as such (p. 18).

The Marketization of Charter Schools: "Narrowing the Ideological Tent"

However, reflecting a long history of how market tenets overshadow the progressive aims of school choice (Forman, 2005; Kafka, 2008), the progressive pedagogical and political goals of charter schools have been increasingly obscured by the charter movement's conservative and market-oriented underpinnings (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Wells, 2002; Wells et al., 1999). According to Knight Abowitz and Karaba (2010), the charter school movement "has always been an ideologically big tent," incorporating schools framed by both conservative market and progressive democratic tenets (p. 539). Yet by the first decade of the twenty-first century, the charter school movement was virtually entirely aligned with the values undergirding the broader marketization of public education—accountability, choice,

efficiency, and privatization—hence crowding out the progressive pedagogical and political aims of charter schooling (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). This market-oriented line of reasoning echoes Chubb and Moe's (1990) claim that markets correct the shortcomings of democratic institutions by distancing them from politics, bureaucracy, and public governance. Indeed, many contemporary policymakers and charter school advocates discursively frame charters as mechanisms for improving student achievement, providing alternatives for families "trapped" in "failing" public schools, and improving efficiency through private management (D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Lipman, 2011). In 2018, charter school legislation existed in 44 states, Washington, D.C., Guam, and Puerto Rico, and 7,000 charters nationwide educated around 3.2 million students in total (National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2018). The charter sector's rapid expansion in less than 3 decades reflects widespread political support for charter schools as preferred policy tool for improving public education through market mechanisms (Wells, 2002; Lipman, 2011; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010).

Market-based reforms are underpinned by neoliberal ideology, which assumes that the public sector is inherently inefficient and that services traditionally under the auspices of the state, such as transportation, healthcare, and public schooling, will be improved through private management and competitive market effects (Harvey, 2005). In education, market-oriented initiatives include holding schools and teachers accountable for student performance on standardized assessments (Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008), expanding the "menu" of school choice (Chubb & Moe, 1990), and shifting education management and provision to nonprofit and private entities (Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997). These initiatives have expanded since the 1960s, spurred on by an array of federal, state, and local policies and programs, most recently, the 2001 federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (McGuinn, 2006). Market-based reforms have also proliferated with much political and financial support from an array of interest groups, advocacy groups, intermediary organizations, and foundations, many of which emerged post-NCLB (Anderson & Donchik, 2016; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2011; McGuinn, 2012).

Advocates of market-based education reforms argue that these initiatives improve school quality and student achievement. In doing so, they overlook the impact of market reforms on educational equity for poor students, students of color, and other communities historically underserved by the public school system. Indeed, whereas policymakers, advocates, and reformers often frame market-based initiatives as politically neutral, much research documents how market reforms reinforce persistently inequitable schooling for poor children and children of color (Buras, 2011; Carter & Welner, 2013; D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Lipman, 2011; Scott, 2011). Moreover, many market-based policies, such as the expansion of school choice and privatization, have proliferated, particularly in urban areas, at the expense of equity-oriented policies intended to redistribute resources and ensure equitable access (Rooks, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). For example, scholars have demonstrated how school choice policies, when lacking explicit racial equity considerations, have contributed to levels of racial segregation that equal or surpass those prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that found state-sponsored school segregation to be unconstitutional (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011; Orfield, 2013). Furthermore, scholars have documented how competitive market dynamics often create and exacerbate already existing unequal choices for families (C. A. Bell, 2009; Brown & Makris, 2018; Cucchiara, 2013) and incentivize educators and advocates to prioritize profits and performance over student well-being (Bracey, 2003; Jabbar, 2015).

Despite the mixed evidence on market-based reforms, they have become widely accepted as an ideal vehicle for improving public education (Trujillo & Renée, 2015). In turn, charter schools' progressive underpinnings have increasingly been overshadowed by market-oriented ones (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Wells, 2002). Writing at the close of the charter movement's first decade, Wells et al. (1999) argue that, while some charters fulfill progressive and democratic aims, the sector as a whole does little to remedy systemic inequities as long as it is defined by the market dynamics of global capitalism. Hence, the "ideologically big tent" that once characterized the charter school movement has increasingly narrowed in tandem with the growing influence of neoliberal ideology in policy and politics globally, and in American public education specifically.

CMOs as Market-Oriented Charter Schools

The contemporary marketization of charter schools is perhaps best exemplified by the CMO model. CMOs consist of central offices that operate "networks" of multiple schools and emerged as a response to concerns from neoliberal advocates that charter schools to date had slow and limited impact on education reform. As such, CMOs aim to scale up the charter sector rapidly by efficiently replicating successful schools within their networks (Farrell, et. al, 2012). Policymakers and philanthropists have embraced the CMO model as an ideal means of expanding the number of charter schools with proven records of academic achievement, particularly in urban districts. Indeed, "venture philanthropists," including such organizations as the New Schools Venture Fund and Charter School Growth Fund; and major foundations, such as the Broad, Gates, and Walton Foundations, have lent robust financial support to CMOs. According to Scott (2009), venture philanthropists, like venture capitalists in the private sector, "invest" in ventures that promise high "returns" in the form of student achievement or sector growth. Importantly, venture philanthropists fund not only CMOs themselves, but also an array of organizations that provide technical and advocacy support to CMOs; they also actively disseminate research casting CMOs in a favorable light (Scott & Jabbar, 2014). By contrast, many philanthropists are hesitant to support independent charter schools unaffiliated with CMOs, as they deem such schools, which do not promise to scale up, less efficient and impactful on the broader education reform movement (Quinn et al., 2016). Similarly, Scott and Holme (2002) demonstrate the variation in charters' ability to attract private funding, arguing that this variation is rooted in charters' "social status and the social networks of their local school communities" (p. 102). While not specifically addressing CMOs, their work is consistent with research illustrating that CMOs are more likely than independent charter schools to have access to affluent and high-status donor networks (Quinn et al., 2016).

At the same time, CMOs have been subject to widespread critique. In particular, a growing body of evidence casts doubt on the claim that CMOs advance equity for students of color in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. For instance, research suggests that CMOs' high student outcomes result from a curriculum disproportionately oriented around test preparation, to the exclusion of nurturing students' curiosities and social-emotional development (Goodman, 2013). Relatedly, many CMOs subscribe to "no-excuses" pedagogy, maintaining highly structured environments with strict rules regarding student behavior and comportment as a means of minimizing distractions from learning (Golann, 2015). Some argue that the no-excuses approach is unnecessarily punitive (Taylor, 2015c) and reinforces White cultural norms of behavior among majority Black and Latinx students (White, 2015). Other research suggests that CMOs' high levels of student achievement are related to selective enrollment patterns (Welner,

2013) and high attrition rates (Miron, Urschel, & Saxton, 2011; Vasquez Heilig, Williams, McNeil, & Lee, 2011). And, despite claims from advocates that CMOs advance equity, researchers have demonstrated how CMOs reinforce racial segregation in cities already deeply stratified by race and class (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014).

Maintaining a Progressive Mission in a Market-Based Context

Knight Abowitz and Karaba (2010) argue that "charter schools are uniquely positioned to serve this [democratic] complex view of educational justice, *if* these schools are collaboratively designed with citizens and monitored and evaluated by state authorities using guidelines developed from its integrated principles" (p. 545, emphasis original). Research on progressive, "mission-oriented" independent charter schools designed by local community stakeholders documents how these schools' missions play out in terms of pedagogy and school culture (Fox & Buchanan, 2014; Henig et al., 2005; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004; Wilson, 2016), and the impact of market dynamics on the implementation of such pedagogical and culture-building approaches (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Wells et al., 1999; White, 2018). Yet the research on independent, progressive charter schools remains relatively thin in light of increasing scholarly attention on the expanding share of market-oriented charters, particularly CMOs. In particular, we know little about how independent charter schools oriented founded upon progressive missions mobilize political and financial resources to emerge and survive in a market context, and how their resource mobilization efforts impact their approaches to enacting pedagogically and politically progressive schooling.

This dissertation extends the disparate literature on independent charter schools by investigating how such schools garner political, financial, and ideological support to maintain their progressive missions in an educational environment disproportionately aligned with the market values of accountability, choice, individual achievement, efficiency, and privatization. In doing so, this study illuminates the opportunities and challenges associated with maintaining a progressive pedagogical and political mission in an educational arena deeply rooted in market values.

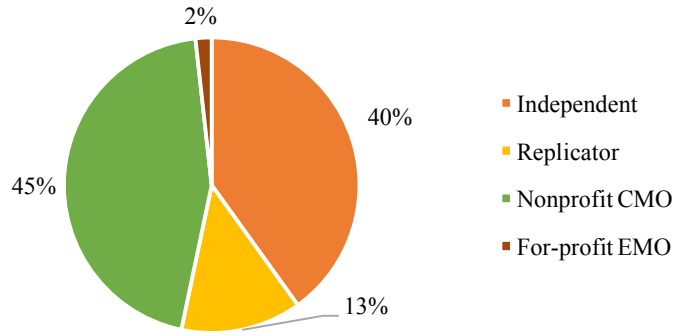
Part II: Research Context: The Institutional and Political Landscape of Charter Schools in New York City

The Institutional Landscape

New York City, the nation's largest school district, was home to 227 charter schools in the 2017–2018 school year. By contrast, a decade earlier, in 2007–2008, the city had 61 charter schools (Domanico, 2015). Hence, over 10 years, the number of charters nearly quadrupled. As depicted in Figure 1, in 2017–2018, nearly half, or 47%, of all New York City charter schools were affiliated with a nonprofit CMO (45%) or a for-profit EMO (2%), though the state law no longer permits EMOs to operate new charter schools. The largest CMO in New York City, by far, was Success Academy, which opened in 2006 and has since expanded to 46 schools serving 15,500 students (Success Academy Charter Schools, n.d.). By contrast, 91 charter schools, or 40% of the sector, were independent from any management organization, and 30 charters, or 13% of the sector, were classified as "replicators," meaning that they comprise a small number of multiple schools. Unlike CMO-affiliated charters, replicator schools are not overseen by a centralized management organization, though some replicators eventually do transition to a

CMO model by establishing a central office (R. Iserman, Personal Communication, June 6, 2018).

Figure 1:
Charter School Affiliation, 2017–2018



Source: New York City Charter School Center (2017). Charter School Facts. Retrieved from http://www.nyccharterschools.org/sites/default/files/resources/NYC-Charter-Facts.pdf

New York City's public schools are divided into 32 Community School Districts (CSDs), and, in four CSDs, over 20% of students attend charter schools (Domanico, 2015). These charter-dense CSDs are located in three geographic areas: Harlem, in Northern Manhattan; Central Brooklyn; and the South Bronx (New York City Charter School Center, 2016). These neighborhoods are home to high concentrations of Black, Latinx, and poor communities. According to data compiled by the New York City Charter School Center (2016), in 2016, 46% of all kindergarten students in Harlem attended a charter school. In Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx, respectively, these figures were 33% and 25%.

In 2017–2018, New York City charter schools educated 114,000 students, or about 10% of the 1.1 million students in the district. Although serving only a small percentage of all students, the number of students enrolled in charters grew by 364% between 2007–2013, while enrollment in traditional public schools declined by about 3% during the same period (Domanico, 2015). The majority of students enrolled in charter schools were African American (54%) and Latinx (38%), and 76% of all charter school students were economically-disadvantaged, meaning that they qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (New York City Charter School Center, 2017). Overall, charters served a smaller percentage of English language learners and students with special learning needs relative to traditional public schools (Domanico, 2015). In addition, data compiled by Domanico (2015) for New York City's Independent Budget Office indicate that network-affiliated charters served smaller percentages of English language learners and students with special learning needs relative to independent charter schools unaffiliated with any management organization.

The Political Landscape

Charters "generally do not try to go it alone." In the early years of the charter school movement in New York City, most charter schools were community-based operations that were mission-driven and established by local educators or community members or in partnership with a local community organization. As described in the 1998 law, New York State's Charter Schools Act was intended "to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community

members to establish and maintain schools that operate independent of existing schools and school districts" (New York State Charter Schools Act, 1998). New York City's first charter schools largely aligned with this vision, and comprised a heterogeneous sector of schools designed to meet local preferences and needs. For instance, New York's first charter school, Sisulu-Walker Charter School of Harlem, integrated Swahili language and culture into the curriculum and partnered with a neighborhood YMCA (White, 2018).

Since the first years of the movement, the technical and financial challenges associated with operating a charter school in New York City compelled many school leaders to partner informally with a "friend" organization, such as a local community-based group, or formally with a nonprofit or for-profit institution, including an EMO. As Ascher et al. (2001) found, charters "generally do not try to go it alone" (p. 29). Institutional partners provided technical support in such areas as payroll, accounting, and student support, which were services the Department of Education provided to traditional public schools, but not to charters (Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, & Troy, 2003). Perhaps more importantly, institutional partners supported charters' financial needs. New York City is a particularly difficult environment in which to start a new charter school given high operational and capital expenses, but relatively little public funding to cover these costs (Jacobowitz & Gyurko, 2004), especially after the New York State Legislature froze state funding for charter schools following the 2009 Great Recession (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2017). Given charter leaders' limited capacity for fundraising, partnering with external organizations proved invaluable, as "both nonprofit and for-profit partners employed full-time development staff, who wrote federal and state grant proposals, coordinated letter writing campaigns, sponsored benefit dinners, and gave school tours for corporate, foundation, and individual funders" (Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, & Troy, 2003, p. 5). Relatedly, institutional partners assisted new charters in gaining access to and financing facilities. In a city where "space is scarce and rent is high" (Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, & Troy, 2003, p. 10), "the overwhelming expense of construction, renovation, leasing, insurance, and debt service for school facilities was also a major impetus for start-up schools to partner with external organizations" (p. 5).

Institutional partners also assisted New York City's earliest charter schools with navigating the burgeoning state- and nation-wide performance-based accountability system (Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, Troy et al., 2003; Wells, 2002). The high-stakes accountability regime created extensive and burdensome reporting requirements that were, in theory, consequential to charters' continued existence. As Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, Troy et al. (2003), explain, charters schools faced a "life or death" moment at the conclusion of their charter term, and having an institutional partner to take on the required reporting tasks was perceived among school leaders as making a difference to their school's survival prospects (p. 10).

In sum, local contextual conditions related to high operational costs and accountability pressures compelled emerging charter schools to partner with external organizations. In supporting new charter schools in the areas of school management, fundraising, facilities, and accountability reporting, charter schools' institutional partners effectively foreshadowed CMOs as a charter management model.

Policies facilitate rapid charter and CMO growth. Despite challenging conditions, charter schools proliferated in the first decade of the twenty-first century, in large part due to local, state, and national policies that facilitated their growth. Businessman Michael Bloomberg was elected Mayor of New York City and assumed office in 2002, 4 years after the enactment of

New York State's Charter Schools Act. During Bloomberg's 12-year tenure, charter schools were a key aspect of his education reform agenda, which centered on privatization and other market-based policies (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016; DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Lewis, 2013). To institute his agenda, Bloomberg assumed direct oversight of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) through mayoral control, thus dismantling democratically-elected community school boards (Lewis, 2013). Bloomberg's signature "Children First" initiative was designed to create a "portfolio" of educational options, including charter schools, in turn expanding school choice for families (Lewis, 2013). Furthermore, informed by his professional background in business, Bloomberg's approach to education reform were largely shaped by best practices for efficiency in the private sector, such as contracting and replacing democratically-elected school or district officials with appointed "managers" (Scott & DiMartino, 2009). Hence, during the Bloomberg years, numerous privately-managed CMOs were established and grew in size rapidly. Bloomberg also facilitated CMO expansion by allowing charters to locate in public facilities free of charge; given the charter school facilities and funding challenges discussed above, free public space greatly advanced charter growth (Jacobowitz & Gyurko, 2004). As part of his reform agenda, persistently low-performing public schools were deemed "failures" and shuttered by the DOE, and charter schools soon entered these vacant facilities (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016). Bloomberg also helped to establish the New York City Charter School Center, which provides technical support to charter schools and advocates politically on behalf of the sector.

In addition to the Bloomberg Administration, the New York State Legislature greatly facilitated charter school growth. In 2007 and again in 2010, legislators passed an amendment to raise the statutory limit on the number of charter schools allowable in the state. The 2010 amendment was tied to New York State's application for federal Race to the Top funds, which specified that state applicants commit to expanding charter schools (McGuinn, 2011; White, 2018). New York's statewide charter school cap was raised again in 2015. According to the terms of this charter cap, New York City could operate up to 38 more schools (New York City Charter School Center, 2016). Another change in 2010 to New York State's Charter Schools Act aided charter school expansion. As White (2018) explains, in 2010, a change to the law permitted a single "incorporated board" of trustees to govern and manage multiple charter schools. This change effectively facilitated the expansion of CMOs, "enabling easy replication of schools governed by single incorporated CMO boards" (White, 2018, p. 83). Although the State Legislature froze the state charter school funding formula beginning in 2009, charter schools continued to expand in number thanks to the legislative changes discussed above (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2017).

Finally, in addition to receiving robust political support, many CMOs, such as Success Academy, Uncommon Schools, and Achievement First, have attracted millions of dollars in philanthropic support from major foundations, such as the Gates and Walton Foundations (Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). These, and similar, CMOs continuously boast high levels of student academic achievement, and donors view their academic track record as evidence that CMOs are ideal educational reform models worthy of further investment. Large foundations have also funded organizations lending political and human capital support to New York City CMOs. These include Students First, a charter advocacy organization; Teach For America, an alternative teacher preparation program formally partners with several CMOs; and the Relay Graduate School of Education, a similar alternative teacher certification program jointly established by the New York branches of the Achievement First, KIPP, and Uncommon Schools CMOs (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014; Taylor, 2015a; Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015).

As CMOs expanded in number during the Bloomberg years, thanks to robust political and financial support and a policy environment that facilitated their growth, independent charter schools comprised smaller shares of the overall charter school sector in New York City. Indeed, independent charters faced numerous organizational and financial challenges from the outset, and policies facilitating the expansion of the CMO model only exacerbated these difficulties. As White (2018) explains, independent charters oriented around progressive and community-centered missions "draw little attention and often exist in the shadow of CMOs" (p. 94). These patterns largely mirror trends in other urban school districts, such as Los Angeles and New Orleans, where CMOs comprise a disproportionate share of the charter school sector (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015).

The Politically Contested Nature of Charter Schools

Dating to the Bloomberg years, community members, civic leaders, and public school educators have criticized charter schools as tied to an agenda to privatize public education and undermine traditional public schools (Scott & Fruchter, 2009). These arguments perhaps most strongly emanated from the local teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) (e.g., Alliance for Quality Education, 2015). Indeed, many traditional public school teachers, and the communities they served, voiced concerns about sharing facilities, or "co-locating," with charter schools due to overcrowding. A related fear was that charters would displace traditional public schools from their buildings, as numerous shuttered schools across the city were quickly replaced by charters (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016).

Charter schools, particularly CMOs, faced pushback from some communities and public school educators concerned with these schools' inequitable approaches to admissions, instruction, and discipline. The largest and most rapidly expanding CMOs in New York City, such as Success Academy, KIPP, Uncommon Schools, and Achievement First, continuously boast high test scores; indeed, Success Academy students regularly outperform students in some predominantly wealthy and White suburbs (Disare, 2017). Yet some evidence suggests that these high student outcomes result from a rigid pedagogical model oriented around test preparation, at the expense of extracurricular activities and a more student-directed, exploratory instructional approach (Ravitch, 2010). In addition, evidence demonstrates that some of these high-performing CMOs enroll few to no English language learners or students with special learning needs, such that these schools' test scores are not comparable to those of traditional public schools that enroll high percentages of special student populations (Baker & Ferris, 2011). Finally, as described above, many CMOs have been critiqued for their no-excuses approach to instruction and discipline (Golann, 2015; White, 2018).

Perhaps the most politically polarizing CMO in New York City is the largest, Success Academy, which has proven to be a "market leader" within the charter school landscape (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018, p. 20). Success Academy CEO Eva Moskowitz has been a controversial figure in New York City's charter school arena, drawing both praise and criticism for her rigid approach to instruction and discipline (Taylor, 2015c), her high-profile political engagement on the city and state levels as she rapidly expands her school network (Shapiro, 2017a), and evidence that Success Academy accepts funds from politically polarizing individuals and organizations, including the Dick and Betsy DeVos Foundation (Green, 2017). Working alongside various city- and statewide charter school advocacy organizations, such as Families for Excellent Schools and Students First, Moskowitz has spearheaded highly visible protests, rallies, and marches aimed at generating political support for charter school expansion through raising

the statewide charter cap and providing all charter schools with free public facilities (Shapiro, 2015). More recently, Moskowitz was among President Trump's candidates for Secretary of Education before he nominated Betsy DeVos, and many Success Academy donors also contributed to the Trump campaign (Shapiro, 2017a). For these reasons, Moskowitz has drawn wide criticism from charter advocates across the ideological spectrum (Shapiro, 2017b).

Among Moskowitz's most vocal political critics is Mayor Bill de Blasio, her former colleague on the New York City Council and Michael Bloomberg's successor. As a mayoral candidate, de Blasio framed himself as a political progressive who would remedy persistent inequities in jobs, housing, and public education. As part of his education platform, he campaigned strongly against charter schools. Since taking office in 2013, de Blasio attempted to curb charter school expansion, for example, by requiring that charter schools located in public facilities pay rent. However, his efforts achieved limited success given strong state support for charter schools. Indeed, the majority-Republican State Legislature struck down de Blasio's proposed initiative to charge charters rent (Kaplan & Hernández, 2014). Moreover, as discussed above, the State Legislature lifted the charter school cap in 2015, extending the number of charter schools allowable in New York City. Notably, de Blasio's position on charter schools has faced pushback from both Republicans and Democrats in Albany. New York's Democratic governor, Andrew Cuomo, and other self-identified Democrats have demonstrated loyalty to the reform agenda of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg (Taylor, 2015a). Indeed, campaign finance data indicate that among Cuomo's largest donors were those who supported charter school expansion through the CMO model (Mahoney & Shapiro, 2014).

To distance themselves from the high-profile and contested political activity of CMOs, and to highlight the progressive and community orientations of independent charters, in 2013, a group of independent charter school leaders created an advocacy organization focused on elevating the particular interests of independent charter schools in New York City. This group, the Coalition of Community Charter Schools (C3S), emerged from conversations among independent charter school leaders following de Blasio's inauguration regarding the need to bring more public and political attention to the contributions and concerns of independent, community-based charter schools. As one of C3S's co-directors explained, highly-funded advocacy organizations ensure that CMOs' interests are well-represented in public and policy conversations, but "sometimes those interests [of independent charter schools] are not the same as somebody who wants to make 20 more schools, or… have thirty percent of public schools be charters." Moreover, as described on its website, contrary to aligning with market values, C3S "pursues a positive and collaborative role for charter schooling as part of our public education system," and "C3S schools exemplify the diversity, innovation, quality, and commitment to community that inspired the original vision of the public charter school movement." C3S held its first annual symposium in October 2017, convening independent charter school leaders, staff, and advocates from around the nation. During this event, attendees voted to adopt a statement of core principles rooted in the areas of diversity, equity, quality, collaboration, and community (Coalition of Community Charter Schools, 2018). In March 2018, C3S launched a national organization, the Coalition of Public Independent Charter Schools.

The Role of Market-Based Choice in Reinforcing Inequitable Education in New York City

A burgeoning body of academic research and policy reports has shed light on the high levels of racial segregation and inequities across the New York City public schools (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014; Lander, 2018; New York Appleseed, 2013, 2014; New York City Alliance for

School Integration and Desegregation, 2018). A related line of work has illuminated the role of market-based school choice, including charter schools, in perpetuating racial segregation in New York City (Mader, Hemphill, & Abbas, 2018; Roda, 2018; Roda & Wells, 2013). Thanks largely to increased research and activism, some school choice initiatives have been restructured to prioritize integration. For example, the New York City DOE released a school diversity plan in in 2017, and when integration advocates critiqued the plan for not being aggressive enough, Mayor de Blasio convened a Diversity Advisory Group, comprising researchers, advocates, and a variety of stakeholders (E. A. Harris, 2017). The Advisory Group solicited community input via a series of town halls during the 2017–2018 academic year in order to make formal recommendations to the Mayor and DOE. In addition, in September 2017, the DOE launched a "controlled choice" plan to spur greater socioeconomic integration across the elementary schools of one CSD in Lower Manhattan (Veiga, 2017). Under this plan, families apply for their preferred schools and are assigned based on considerations to achieve socioeconomic diversity. Similarly, in 2018, the DOE approved a community-led initiative to integrate public middle schools in one Brooklyn CSD through restructuring the choice-based application and admissions process (Shapiro, 2018). Furthermore, at the time of this writing, the DOE is considering revising the admissions process to the city's most selective public high schools, which scholars and advocates have critiqued as inequitable and reinforcing racial stratification (Corcoran & Baker-Smith, 2015). Finally, a variety of emerging grassroots community efforts aim to encourage White and wealthy families in gentrifying neighborhoods to choose racially integrated public schools (Roda, 2018).

Researchers and advocates have made related, but fewer, efforts to draw attention to how charter schools in New York City can be intentionally designed to promote racial integration and equity. Of note is a series of reports produced at the New York-based Century Foundation, which analyze "diverse by design" charter schools, including several in New York City, though this report focuses on enrollment trends, rather than dimensions of equity related to resource distribution, curricular content, or community engagement, for instance (Potter & Quick, 2018). A related effort is the national Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC), a nonprofit organization launched in 2016 that engages in research and advocacy to support the potential of charter schools to facilitate racial diversity. Several New York City charters are DCSC members, including Empire and Liberty. However, what constitutes a racially diverse or integrated charter school remains contested, even among DCSC member schools. For instance, Shellie Peek, an Empire co-leader, expressed mixed feelings regarding her school's membership: "I would say most of the schools [in DCSC] are fine. But, Success Academy is a member of the Diverse Charter School Coalition, so that's a problem for us." Shellie's comments illustrate the ideological divisions within New York City's charter sector, where progressive independent and market-oriented CMO-affiliated charters hold conflicting definitions of equity and how to advance it.

The Progressive Possibilities for Charter Schools in New York City

The critiques of CMOs and growing political attention to how school choice reinforces inequity have occurred as a progressive political agenda has taken hold in New York City and nationally. Although the burgeoning progressive wave has had varied policy impacts, it has arguably begun to challenge the ubiquity of neoliberal ideology and market logic in politics, society, and culture. For example, in 2011, progressive activists began the Occupy Wall Street movement, raising global awareness and activism regarding economic inequality and corporate

influences on government. Two years later, as noted above, Bill de Blasio's first mayoral campaign centered on a progressive agenda, particularly economic and housing inequality. Although he has had a mixed record of delivering on his campaign promises, his broad social and economic policy agendas appear to have animated many New Yorkers, as evidenced by his little-challenged reelection in 2017. Although many aspects of Bloomberg's educational agenda persist under de Blasio's tenure (Taylor, 2015a), de Blasio has attempted to challenge Bloomberg's business orientation toward education reform, appointing career educators Carmen Fariña, followed by Richard Carranza, to the role of Department of Education Chancellor. Carranza in particular has been outspoken about the need to remedy racial integration through equity-oriented admissions policies and culturally-responsive pedagogy (Goldstein, 2018).

On the state level, in 2014, Fordham University law professor Zephyr Teachout ran a gubernatorial campaign centered on campaign finance reform and an increase to the minimum wage; though she lost to incumbent Andrew Cuomo, she captured over one-third of votes, a strong showing given that Cuomo's campaign far outspent hers. In 2016, though New Yorkers overwhelmingly supported Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton over her self-identified Democratic Socialist opponent Bernie Sanders, Sanders's campaign nevertheless appeared to inspire a wave of additional progressive candidates. These included numerous candidates for state office in 2018, such as Teachout, Cynthia Nixon, and Jumaane Williams, who each ultimately lost their primary races. However, former Sanders campaign organizer Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, unseated Democratic incumbent Joe Crowley in New York's 14th Congressional District, taking the Democratic Party nationally by surprise. And in the November 2018 midterm election, six progressive New York State Senate candidates unseated incumbent members of the Independent Democratic Conference, a breakaway group of Democratic Senators who had been caucusing with Senate Republicans on numerous policy issues, including public education. The six newly seated Senators have promised to curb charter school expansion, standardized testing, and privatization, and to support culturally-responsive education and equitable school finance policies (Jacobs, 2018).

Given emerging support in New York for a more progressive political agenda, centered on remedying systemic inequities and advancing racial, social, and economic justice, the time is ripe to investigate the possibilities for charter schools to likewise facilitate a progressive vision of public education. Progressive ideals face numerous challenges in the contemporary neoliberal landscape, as the unsuccessful campaigns of candidates such as Sanders, Teachout, Nixon, and Williams illustrate. This study investigates the political, financial, and ideological challenges confronting progressive charter schools, and how, in light of such challenges, these schools mobilize the support needed to remain afloat in the market-oriented environment.

Part III: The Focal Charter Schools

Empire, Liberty, and Hudson Charter Schools' founding missions and curricular themes were each oriented around progressive pedagogical models that emphasize inquiry and hands-on learning rather than on a no-excuses approach. Further, these schools' founders and leaders, in various ways, aimed to enroll a diverse student population as a means to advancing equity in a city deeply segregated by race, class, home language, and disability (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014). Finally, each of these schools instituted distinct leadership structures intended to empower

teachers and distribute responsibilities across various layers of the organization, harkening back to the community-empowerment goals of the earliest charter schools (Lipman, 2011).

To illustrate, three teachers founded Empire to serve a racially and socioeconomically integrated population in a gentrifying neighborhood through progressive pedagogy. Liberty, founded by parents and community members, is "unscreened" by design in a neighborhood where most public middle schools are academically selective and thus, stratify along the lines of race, class, language, and ability. Further, Liberty's inquiry-based curriculum is oriented around the themes of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. And Hudson, as discussed above, was established by educators in the early 1990s as a traditional public school rooted in inquiry-based, experiential learning and global citizenship development, and later converted to charter status to further its realization of teacher autonomy and its distributed leadership model. In addition, Hudson is a unionized charter school, whereas most charter schools across the country are not unionized and have been critiqued for weakening unions (Lipman, 2011).

As I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, each of the focal three schools in this study engaged with the broader political landscape and charter school discourse in distinct ways. For instance, all were affiliated with the New York City Charter School Center and C3S, though their levels of involvement with each group varied. Similarly, the schools had different levels of engagement with local communities and elected officials, such as City Councilmembers and Regents. School leaders and board trustees at all three schools were also highly aware of Eva Moskowitz's political activities, and while some expressed outright critique of her approaches, others were open to learning from, and even joining, her efforts. Finally, school leaders, board trustees, advocates, and other stakeholders varied in how they located their school within the discourse surrounding the role of charters in advancing or constraining racial equity. For instance, some school leaders explicitly viewed their schools as vehicles for disrupting deep levels of racial segregation and inequity through enrollment as well as curricular and disciplinary approaches, while others invoked their school's equity-oriented mission in a more broad or vague manner, particularly when navigating the pressures of existing within a market context.

Part IV: Dissertation Overview

In chapter two, I situate this dissertation within the scholarship on the politics of market-based education reforms and policies. I discuss how scholars define market-based educational policies and explain the political conditions that led to the rise of such policies. I then examine the research on the "limits to the market metaphor" (Henig, 1994), or how market-based policies constrain equity and democracy. Next, I review the literature on charter schools as a case of market-based reform, and I highlight the limited research to date on independent charter schools oriented around progressive pedagogical or political missions.

Chapter three presents this study's conceptual framework. Modeled on Scott and Villavicencio's (2009) framework for explaining what charter schools do, have, and know to foster favorable student achievement outcomes, this study's framework draws from the empirical literature on what charter schools do, have, and know to survive organizationally in a competitive market arena. The framework captures the practices, resources, and knowledge charter schools exhibit in their efforts to attain a competitive advantage in the market. This framework allowed me to examine the extent to which this study's focal progressive charters resembled market-oriented ones in seeking to advance their survival prospects, and with what impact on their founding missions.

In chapter four, I describe and motivate this study's research design. I discuss the decision to conduct a qualitative, comparative case study of three independent charter schools. I explain how the focal schools were theoretically sampled based on the literature, which distinguishes among independent, mission-oriented charter schools by founder type (Henig et al., 2005; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). I then describe each of the three focal charter schools in detail, explaining their missions, founding stories, and other defining attributes. This is followed by a discussion of this study's sources of data, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. I also describe how my positionality as a researcher impacted my access to data and approaches to data collection and analysis. I close this chapter by describing limitations and strengths to the research design.

Chapters five through seven detail this study's findings. In chapter five, I discuss Hudson Charter School's approaches to mobilizing support for its survival, and how some such approaches conflicted with the school's founding progressive mission to advance equity and students' civic development. Hudson, as described above, was the oldest school in the study, in its fourth charter term at the time of data collection. Hudson effectively maintained its focus on its progressive pedagogical and organizational mission over the years, having retained many of the staff and parent volunteers involved in developing and refining the mission, including Principal Jolene Agee. At the same time, however, Hudson's leaders and board responded to market dynamics by pursuing a school expansion plan that would potentially create inequitable educational conditions across its CSD. Although interviewees described Hudson's expansion as a response to high demand from over 3,000 waitlisted students, expansion would also facilitate Hudson's competitive advantage over neighboring public schools, allowing it a greater share of the educational market. Interviewees appeared not to acknowledge how Hudson's expansion plan would create inequities across its CSD, potentially siphoning students, and in turn, public funds, from neighboring schools.

Chapter six discusses the practices, resources, and knowledge exhibited among the leaders and board trustees of Liberty Charter School in the effort to mobilize support for the school's founding sustainability-themed mission. Liberty was a relatively new school at the time of data collection: its governing board had recently submitted the school's renewal application for a second charter term. Despite persistent under-enrollment, Liberty appeared to enjoy much financial and political support from high-status and affluent networks. Nevertheless, Liberty's leaders and board trustees continued to devote much attention to securing a competitive advantage in the market through building the school's brand, illustrating how they commoditized public education and defined it in market terms. In doing so, Liberty's leaders and board came to define sustainability less in terms of caring for the broader community, and more in terms of achieving organizational longevity in the competitive market.

In chapter seven, I discuss the practices, resources, and knowledge among Empire Charter School's leaders and board trustees as they sought to ensure organizational survival. Similar to Liberty, Empire enjoyed many resource advantages from its inception, thanks to an extensive, high-status network and geographic proximity to affluent families. Yet in cultivating ties with such networks, Empire largely neglected to foster broader community relationships, in contrast to the communitarian tenets of its founding progressive mission. In addition, in response to perceived accountability pressures, Empire ended its policy of admitting students mid-year, fearing that doing so would lower the school's test scores. Yet this practice directly contradicted the school's founding aim to advance equitable educational opportunity and access. These examples, and others, were evidence of Empire's narrow definition of progressivism, which

limited practices that would foster equitable and democratic education across the wider community.

Finally, chapter eight presents a cross-case analysis. I discuss the ways in which the focal charters' practices, resources, and knowledge resembled those of market-oriented charter schools, leading them to undermine their founding progressive aims and thus experience "mission drift" (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014; Weisbrod, 2004). I then discuss how this study's findings demonstrate an extension of Tyack and Tobin's (1994) conceptualization of the grammar of schooling, explaining how a neoliberal grammar of schooling compels schools to shape their pedagogical, political, resource mobilization, and community engagement approaches around market tenets. I close with presenting recommendations for policy, practice, and research in order to guide a more progressive charter school agenda.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: The Politics of Market-Based Education Reform and Policies: Reshaping the Role of Public Education in a Democratic Society

"Current-day discussions about the future of education are conducted almost entirely in the language of the free market: individual achievement, competition, choice, economic growth, and national security."
—Michael Engel, *The Struggle for Control of Public Education* (2000), p. 3

The rise of market tenets has dramatically altered the political landscape of public education. Market values, as reflected in federal, state, and school district policies, have shifted school governance arrangements (e.g., Arsen & Mason, 2013; Henig, 2010; Morel, 2018), expanded the arena of educational interest groups (e.g., Cibulka, 2001; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009), and altered the distribution of power and influence among various constituencies (Buras, 2011; DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Lipman, 2011). Furthermore, market logics have redefined the goals of public schooling, framing education as a mechanism for individual advancement rather than as a collective, public good; and as a vehicle for strengthening the economy rather than for furthering democracy (Engel, 2000; Labaree, 1997; Lubienski, 2001). Despite inconsistent evidence on the efficacy of market-based educational policies, they have gained broad acceptance among policymakers and the public as the solution to such enduring issues as persistently low student achievement and inefficiencies across a bureaucratic system (D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Trujillo & Renée, 2015).

Scholars trace the ubiquity of market values in education as far back as the federal Great Society policies of the 1960s, which advanced educational opportunity, more so than redistributive social and economic initiatives, as a mechanism for remedying poverty, unemployment, and income inequality (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). During subsequent decades, the federal government further dismantled equity-oriented and redistributive education policies, such as court-ordered desegregation, and expanded policies that focused on holding schools, districts, and states accountable for raising student outcomes (Kantor & Lowe, 2006, 2013; McGuinn, 2006). Meanwhile, education interest groups expanded in number to include politically powerful and ideologically conservative think tanks, foundations, and business leaders promoting market-oriented approaches to education reform (Anderson & Donchik, 2016; DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Haas, 2007; Rich, 2001). These conservative ideologues framed low student achievement not on racial or socioeconomic inequities, but rather, on state overreach, a lack of clear learning standards, an absence of mechanisms for holding schools accountable for student achievement, and pervasive government inefficiencies (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). By the 1990s, the business community had joined forces with political elites, particularly state governors, to facilitate market approaches to school reform (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; McGuinn, 2006). And by the end of the twentieth century, market-based education policies advancing accountability, competition, school choice, and privatization were ubiquitous, though they left intact inequities along racial, social, and economic lines.

Research on market-based policies demonstrates how they reinforce already established advantages for some, while deepening disadvantages for others (Scott & Holme, 2016). This scholarship illustrates that market-based policies, despite promising much-needed reforms, fall short of (a) producing more equitable educational opportunities for poor communities and

communities of color (e.g., Carter & Welner, 2013; Kantor & Lowe, 2006), (b) improving student achievement among marginalized youth (e.g., Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Scott & Villavicencio, 2009), and (c) advancing collective and democratic discourse, particularly among historically disenfranchised communities (e.g., Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Trujillo & Renée, 2015). Hence, the rise and impact of market-based education policies warrants examination from a political perspective, as the study of politics is an investigation of "who gets what, when, and how" (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, citing Laswell, 1936).

In this chapter, I situate this study within the scholarship on the politics of market-based education reforms and policies. In Part I, I explain how the rise of conservative and neoliberal ideology led to the dismantling of equity-oriented social policies and the expansion of market-oriented ones. In Part II, I discuss how widespread neoliberalism beginning in the mid-1980s fundamentally altered the political landscape surrounding public education, giving rise to new interest groups advocating for market-based policies that would expand accountability, school choice, and privatization. Part III examines the research on the "limits to the market metaphor" (Henig, 1994), or how market-based policies constrain equity and democracy by advancing the interests of politically powerful neoliberal reformers while leaving unaddressed persistently inequitable racial and socioeconomic conditions. In Part IV, I discuss the scholarship on charter schools as a case of market-based reform, and how charters evolved from an ideologically diverse sector to one largely aligned with market values. This literature demonstrates how conservative and neoliberal charter school advocates hold disproportionate political influence, crowding out a progressive vision of charter schooling. Finally, in Part V, I conclude by arguing that independent charter schools founded upon progressive pedagogical or political missions warrant further investigation, as they represent an opportunity to advance a more equitable and democratic approach to public education against the backdrop of enduring market values.

Part I: Setting the Stage for Market Reforms: The Rise of Conservative and Neoliberal Ideology and the Decline of Equity-Oriented Social and Education Policies

Americans have long held multiple goals for public education: to advance democratic equality and the collective good, to facilitate individual opportunity and social mobility, and to train future workers to contribute to the economy (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004; Labaree, 1997). While these goals have always coexisted and have been in tension with one another, the rise of conservative and neoliberal ideology since the mid-1960s facilitated the eclipse of democratic and equity-oriented goals in favor of market-oriented ones centered on education's potential to advance economic growth. The 1960s, during which President Lyndon Johnson declared his "War on Poverty," may seem an unlikely prelude to the decline of equity-based policies. Indeed, Title I of the 1965 federal *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) directed federal funds to schools serving poor students. However, as Kantor and Lowe (2013) argue, this redistributive policy was instituted without related policies to address broad racial, social, and economic inequities, and hence limited Title I's impact on the academic achievement of poor students. Instead, ESEA signaled the beginning of federal efforts aimed at "educationalizing the welfare state," or substituting the provision of public education for the provision of social policies that would remedy poverty and income inequality (Kantor & Lowe, 2013, p. 25). In other words, rather than instituting policies that would foster full employment and resource redistribution, through ESEA, the state extended education to poor students so that

they could acquire the skills needed to lift themselves out of poverty and hence lend human capital to national economic development (Engel, 2000; Kantor & Lowe, 2013).

Throughout the 1970s, politically influential conservative and libertarian ideologues further deepened a public narrative critiquing state spending on social welfare and connecting education with the economy. For example, with funding from conservative foundations, think tanks such as the Cato Institute and Manhattan Institute engaged in aggressive advocacy and marketing efforts, advancing a public discourse that framed social welfare policies as encouraging dependence on the government and hence stifling economic growth (Kantor & Lowe, 2013; Rich, 2001). These groups called for a more limited state role in education, advancing the argument of libertarian economist Milton Friedman (1962) that the government should not fund schools directly, but rather, support a free-market educational system through the provision of state-funded vouchers, which would enable families to exercise school choice. Alongside think tanks, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a policy advocacy organization founded in 1973 and comprising conservative business leaders and state legislators, worked to write "model bills" that would expand vouchers and other market-oriented policies (Anderson & Donchik, 2016).

These political developments coincided with an economic recession and high unemployment in the 1970s, which conservative politicians and ideologues attributed to excessive state spending on social welfare policies (Tolofari, 2005). Against this backdrop, conservative advocates called for policies to shrink the public sector and rely instead on a "market" of private sector firms to deliver services more efficiently and cost-effectively (Harvey, 2005; Sclar, 2000; Tolofari, 2005). For example, during the early 1970s, over 150 school districts and multiple states across the nation instituted "performance contracting," paying for-profit educational firms based on their record of improving students' test scores. The performance contracting system was supported politically and financially by the Nixon Administration (Ascher, 1996). In addition, a particular market enthusiast was Ronald Reagan, who was elected president in 1980. During Reagan's two terms in office, federal policies further shrank the welfare state and instituted market-based educational initiatives such as vouchers and tuition tax credits, which were designed to enable parents to select from a marketplace of schooling options (Kantor & Lowe, 2013).

According to Ball (1993), policies emerge from discourses, or values, ideas, and practices that set the parameters for what is socially and politically possible. By the 1980s, the dominant discourse centered on neoliberal ideology, which assumes that the private sector is inherently more efficient than the public sector and calls for the government's role to be limited to advancing policies that would enable the free market to thrive (Harvey, 2005). As Lipman (2011) explains, neoliberalism assumes that "societies function best when individuals are free to pursue their interests in the market without government intervention," and policies that facilitate corporate growth will generate benefits that will "'trickle down' to benefit everyone" (p. 8). Aligned with this neoliberal vision, the government instituted policies that deregulated the economy, cut corporate tax rates, further dismantled the welfare state, and turned numerous public services, such as road construction and transportation, over to the market (Harvey, 2005; Sclar, 2000). The neoliberal policy agenda also further heightened the link between public education and human capital development for the economy (Lipman, 2011).

This line of thinking gained prominence with the publication in 1983 of the federally-commissioned report *A Nation at Risk*, which attributed the United States' economic woes to the state of public education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The authors

claimed that "America's position in the world" as an economic competitor was no longer "secure," and "if only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we will retain in world markets, we must rededicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all" (p. 7). The report was widely publicized amid ongoing national concerns about the sluggish economy, when "the national mood was one of self-doubt and helplessness" (T. H. Bell, 1988, p. 114). In demonstrating the decline of SAT scores from 1963 to 1980, the report helped to solidify doubts already held among many Americans that federal investment in equitable education through Title I funding was an ineffective strategy for improving student outcomes (McGuinn, 2006). The authors recommended a renewed focus on achieving "excellence" through fewer electives; more academic courses in English, math, science, and social studies; and instituting test-based evaluations of student proficiency (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Building from the political and ideological developments of the previous two decades, *A Nation at Risk* not only deepened the link between education and the economy, but also further divorced education from an equity-orientation by emphasizing excellence for *all* students, rather than recommending redistributive policies or addressing the social, economic, and political barriers constraining the academic achievement of poor students and students of color (Mehta, 2013). The priority on educational outcomes over equity had a profound effect on subsequent school reform policies, as well as the broader politics surrounding public education (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Mehta, 2013). As I discuss in the following section, education policies and politics since the 1980s have been increasingly oriented around the market fundamentalism underpinning neoliberal ideology. However, in neglecting to address how inequitable racial, social, and economic conditions map onto public schooling, market-based education policies have often exacerbated already existing racial and socioeconomic inequities in education.

Part II: An Expanded Political Arena and Growing Political Support for Market-Based Policies

From the publication of *A Nation at Risk* to the present, the political arena of education policymaking has expanded with the entry of new actors, such as business elites, intermediary organizations, and philanthropists, animated by the economic rationale for reforming public education. These actors subscribe to neoliberal ideology and engage in extensive political mobilization and lobbying activities to pressure policymakers into instituting market-based policies (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Malen, 2001; Mehta, 2013). Identifying across the political party spectrum, these actors, along with much of the public, "generally view markets as fair and powerful engines for growth, innovation, and prosperity" (Cucchiara, 2013, p. 13). In turn, advocates for market-based education reforms have argued that (a) schools could be improved through the development of uniform learning standards, to which schools would be held accountable; (b) choice and competition operate as ideal mechanisms to spur on school quality and student achievement; and (c) incorporating the private sector and business practices into public education will render schools more efficient and effective. In what follows, I discuss how, since the 1980s, the political mobilization efforts of an expanded arena of actors led to broad support for policies advancing standards and accountability, school choice, and privatization, while leaving inequitable racial and socioeconomic conditions intact.

Standards and Accountability

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* spurred on support for standards-based reform, though reform initiatives were largely limited to the state level throughout the 1980s. For example, 45 states revised the course requirements for high school graduation, and both Democratic and Republican governors expressed support for reforming education by defining clear learning standards (Mehta, 2013). The 1988 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the Hawkins-Stafford Bill, required states, for the first time, to "define levels of academic achievement that students receiving federal support should attain," but how to do so was left to the states' discretion (Cross, 2010, p. 88). In 1989, President George H. W. Bush convened state governors in Charlottesville, Virginia, for an educational summit, where they created six National Education Goals focused on raising student achievement to be voluntarily adopted by states. Dubbed the America 2000 initiative, it did not become codified legislatively, largely due to Republican opposition to a robust federal role in public education (McGuinn, 2006; Cross, 2010).

However, by the early 1990s, the economic rationale undergirding standards-based reform had animated business leaders, who mobilized with state governors to lobby the federal government to institute national standards and test-based accountability systems; Governor Bill Clinton was an especially active actor in this coalition. Some civil rights groups also supported standards-based reform, hoping that clear learning standards and test-based accountability would help to identify and remedy racial achievement gaps (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009). In 1994, shortly following Bill Clinton's first election to the presidency, Congress passed, with bipartisan support, Clinton's Goals 2000 program, which wrote the National Education Goals into legislation and provided a financial incentive for states to design their own learning standards and assessments. To further incentivize states, the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA required states to adopt standards and assessments in order to receive Title I funding. Yet bipartisan support for Goals 2000 came at the expense of policy attention to equity, or ensuring that all students have access to high-quality teachers, a well-designed curriculum, and adequately resourced schools. While liberal Democrats in Congress argued that disparately resourced schools could not be held equally accountable, and thus, pushed for mandatory "Opportunity to Learn" (OTL) standards, Clinton, in an effort to garner Republican support, ultimately removed OTL standards from Goals 2000 (McGuinn, 2006).

The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, dubbed *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), ushered in a more high-stakes version of the standards-based reform agenda. NCLB, which President George W. Bush signed with bipartisan support, codified into law what had previously been voluntary for the states. In exchange for increased Title I funds, NCLB required states to meet a number of measures, including adopting academic standards; developing a testing and accountability system; ensuring that all classroom teachers are "highly qualified"; and ensuring that all schools demonstrate "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP), with all students reaching 100 percent proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 (McGuinn, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). The bipartisan support in Congress for NCLB mirrored public opinion, as a majority of Americans supported holding students accountable to high academic standards (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004). Unlike previous iterations of accountability policies, NCLB raises the stakes, "specifying the conditions under which schools needing improvement are remedied and the sanctions that are to be imposed" (McDonnell, 2005, p. 33). The high-stakes came in the form of severe sanctions for schools that failed to demonstrate AYP. Sanctions included school closure and reopening the school as a charter school or one managed by a for-profit firm. Low-performing schools were

also required to contract supplemental education services and after-school tutoring to private organizations and facilitate the transfer of students to other schools. In these ways, NCLB also facilitated the expansion of privatization (Burch, 2009).

The challenges with meeting AYP by 2014 compelled many states to seek waivers from NCLB's accountability requirements (Vergari, 2012). While the Obama Administration awarded waivers beginning in 2011, it did not back away from the firmly-rooted accountability agenda. Indeed, "the waivers came with strings," including requiring states to implement additional accountability initiatives such as teacher evaluation systems (DeBray & Blankenship, 2016, p. xi). Moreover, on the heels of the Great Recession, and as part of its federal economic stimulus package, the Obama Administration instituted Race to the Top (RTTT), a competitive grant program to which states and districts could apply; in July 2009, RTTT funds totaled over $4 billion (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). To win RTTT funds, states and districts had to demonstrate their commitment to a variety of market-based reforms, including the adoption of learning standards, the development of teacher evaluation metrics, and the expansion of charter schools and school choice (McGuinn, 2011). During this time, the Gates Foundation largely oversaw the development of the Common Core State Standards and pushed states to adopt these standards to boost their prospects of receiving RTTT funds (McGuinn, 2011).

Relatedly, on the local and state levels, the challenges of attaining AYP encouraged increasing numbers of persistently low-performing school districts, primarily in high-poverty communities of color, to institute mayoral control or state takeover, wherein the city mayor or state governor, respectively, replaced democratically-elected school boards (Wong & Shen, 2003). Although mayoral control and state takeovers, according to the market theory of accountability, are initiatives aimed at improving district efficiency and student performance, the results have been mixed, and scholars argue that the main effect was to politically disempower poor communities of color (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016; Morel, 2018; Rooks, 2018).

More recently, in 2015, Congress reauthorized ESEA as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Reversing the top-down accountability pressures of NCLB, ESSA devolves more authority to the states to develop their own performance goals and interventions for low-performing schools. However, the law continues to encourage a marketized public education system through reinforcing accountability; indeed, ESSA does not reverse NCLB's focus on accountability as a mechanism for school improvement (DeBray & Blankenship, 2016).

School Choice and Privatization

In addition to standards-based reform and accountability, neoliberal and conservative reformers supported school choice initiatives and privatization as solutions to the perceived decline of public education described in *A Nation at Risk*. Notably, in their 1990 publication, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, Chubb and Moe argued that democratic governance of public schools results in high levels of bureaucratic politics, preventing effective education reform. They called for the state not to govern, but to fund public schools and support the smooth functioning of an educational marketplace, wherein schools would be incentivized by competitive market forces to ensure high quality. As an example of market-oriented schooling, Chubb and Moe advocated for "scholarship plans," where families would use government funds to enroll their children in the school of their choice. Many ideologically conservative and neoliberal intermediary organizations, such as the Foundation for Educational Choice (now known as EdChoice) and the Center for Education Reform, played a critical role in advancing the kinds of market-based choice policies supported by Chubb and Moe, such as school vouchers,

through aggressively brokering research to policymakers (Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2011). In addition, as discussed above, ALEC brings legislators together with corporate leaders to write model state legislation and sponsor state bills that promote various forms of privatization, including vouchers. As Anderson and Donchik (2016) describe, ALEC has been particularly effective at employing conservative and neoliberal ideological language to reframe policy problems and solutions, emphasizing how vouchers maximize "freedom," "choice," and "family rights."

Also in the 1990s, Paul Hill and colleagues, building on the logic Chubb and Moe, called for public school districts to contract with a variety of private education providers and thus manage a diverse "portfolio" of schools. This, they argued, would facilitate a process in which families could choose among diverse schools, and competition for families would incentivize low-performing schools to improve (Hill, Haycock, & Maranto, 1999; Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997). The same period saw increasing numbers of school districts contracting with for-profit and nonprofit EMOs, such as Education Alternatives Inc. and Edison Schools Inc., which operated schools under the assumption that private firms could provide education more cost-effectively and efficiently relative to the public sector (Bracey, 2003; Miron & Gulosino, 2013). Yet in urban school districts such as Baltimore, EMO contracts led to a decline in school district employment, threatening the economic well-being of local communities of color (Orr, 1999). Further, several EMOs managed their funds poorly, failed to demonstrate student achievement, and eventually lost their contracts with school districts (Bracey, 2003).

As another way to expand school choice and privatization, between 1991–1999, 36 states had passed charter school laws, facilitating the creation of publicly funded, but privately managed, schools that exchanged greater operational autonomy for increased accountability to improving student achievement (Henig, 2018). Many charter schools founded during this period were designed to advance progressive goals, such as providing more equitable and democratic schooling options for historically underserved communities (Lipman, 2011; Wells et al., 1999). Over time, however, policies were increasingly oriented around a more market-oriented vision of charter schooling; indeed, many EMOs operated charter schools (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). As Wells (2002) explains, throughout the 1990s, charter schools animated not only advocates of market-based choice and privatization, but also supporters of standards-based reform, given charters' accountability requirements. Furthermore, since this period, the most politically active and influential charter advocates advanced a market-oriented and neoliberal definition of charter schooling. For example, the conservative think tank Center for Education Reform advocated for deregulatory charter school laws that allowed for unlimited numbers of charters, thus maximizing the size and scope of the charter market (Wells, 2002). By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the arena of advocacy organizations advancing a market-oriented model of charter schooling expanded and, backed by funding from major foundations, engaged in a variety of political tactics, including lobbying and operating political action committees (McGuinn, 2012; Scott, 2009). Although neoliberal and conservative charter advocates leave unaddressed how charter schools could be a vehicle for facilitating redistributive and equity-oriented policies, such as ensuring equitable funding and access for poor students, they have nonetheless had much success in advancing a narrative linking market-oriented choice to equity and freedom through well-funded advocacy efforts (Scott, 2013a).

In addition to state charter school laws, the enactment of NCLB in 2002 further expanded school choice and privatization. As described above, NCLB required low-performing school districts to contract with for-profit and nonprofit firms not only to operate and manage schools,

but also to provide supplementary education services and tutoring (Burch, 2009). NCLB's focus on testing and accountability also led to an emergence of private firms providing an array of services, such as student data management, test development, and educational content provision (Bulkley & Burch, 2011; Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Henig, 2010). According to Burch (2009), some for-profit firms viewed NCLB and the perpetuation of the achievement gap as a revenue-generating opportunity, signaling how the law advanced corporate interests while doing little to improve the opportunities and outcomes of poor students and students of color. Among the most prominent for-profit and nonprofit firms in the years following NCLB were those operating charter schools, which rapidly expanded in number, especially in urban districts serving poor students and students of color, such as Chicago, New Orleans, New York City (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). Additionally, in the years post-NCLB, many urban districts instituted governance models oriented around managerialism, wherein district "managers," often appointed rather than democratically-elected, oversee a mix of school types, such as those operated by for-profit or nonprofit companies, as a way of expanding choice while spurring on school quality through competitive effects (Henig, 2010). Research has demonstrated, however, that managerial school governance models often dismantle democratic forms of school governance, particularly across poor urban communities, contributing to the political disempowerment of these populations (DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Gold, Simon, Cucchiara, Mitchell, & Riffer, 2007).

More recent education policies have further encouraged school choice and privatization while doing little to address broader issues of equity and democracy in public education. For example, as discussed above, to maximize their prospects of winning RTTT funds, many states passed laws or altered regulations to broaden their market-based educational policies (McGuinn, 2011). Notably, California instituted a "Parent Trigger" law, wherein parents could petition to close or "turn around" low-performing schools (Rogers et al., 2015). In addition to RTTT, the Obama Administration supported market-based choice by increasing federal funding for charter schools through a grant program for charter replication and expansion (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ESSA also provides continued federal support for charter schools and facilitates additional opportunities for privatization (Scott & Holme, 2016). For instance, the Gates Foundation has disbursed about $44 million to private organizations to assist states in developing their new accountability frameworks and performance goals. Perhaps not surprisingly, many states' ESSA plans include the use of the Common Core, which the Gates Foundation helped to develop (Ho, 2018).

Obama's successor, Donald Trump, and Trump's Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, likewise support market-based policies, especially school choice (Klein & Ujifusa, 2017). However, many school choice supporters, including former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, have critiqued DeVos for aiming to expand federal funding for charter schools at the expense of other equity-oriented federal education initiatives (Barnum, 2017). Other school choice advocates have worried that, under DeVos's purview, the market of school choice will be increasingly unregulated, with few consequences for low-quality charter schools (D. N. Harris, 2016; Richmond, 2017). In March 2018, Congress voted to reject much of DeVos's proposed budget increases to expand school choice at the expense of other Department of Education programs. However, Congress approved an increase in charter school funding, from $58 million to $400 million, though DeVos had hoped for $500 million (Balingit & Douglas-Gabriel, 2018).

As I note above, the expansion of neoliberal ideology and market-based policies advancing standards and accountability, school choice, and privatization have occurred with little

explicit attention to racial, social, and economic equity and democracy. In fact, these reforms have often exacerbated already inequitable conditions, particularly in high-poverty communities of color. In the following section, I discuss in more detail how market-based policies have constrained equitable and democratic schooling.

Part III: "Limits to the Market Metaphor": Considerations for Racial Equity and Democracy

Scholars have pointed out the shortcomings of market-based education reforms since they began to take hold in the 1990s. For example, Henig (1994) argued that there are important "limits to the market metaphor," and that the promise of market-based reforms are overstated. First, Henig critiqued market logic for elevating the individual consumption of schools over the collective goals of public education. Second, he argued that markets are inherently inequitable, as school choice is not equitably distributed across all racial and socioeconomic groups, and a market system enables wealthy families to separate their children from those of poor families. Similarly, Margonis and Parker (1995) argued that the choices of White and affluent families systematically limit the choices of poor families of color. They rejected the neoliberal and conservative view of racial segregation as an inevitable byproduct of consumer choice, rather than rooted in systemic racism and socioeconomic inequities. Other scholars have similarly argued how market values are antithetical to democratic equality, and that the marketization of public education undermines the democratic goals of schooling (Engel, 2000; Labaree, 1997). Alongside these critiques, a broad body of empirical scholarship demonstrates how market-based initiatives, framed as politically neutral, obscure the ways that systemic racial and socioeconomic inequity shapes persistently unequal schooling (Carter & Welner, 2013; D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Kantor & Lowe, 2006; Scott, 2011). Related research reveals that market-based reforms' impact on improving the academic achievement of poor students and students of color is largely inconclusive (Amrein-Beardsley, 2008; Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Scott & Villavicencio, 2009). Moreover, scholars have found that new actors in the educational marketplace often operate with little transparency or accountability to the public (Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012) and undermine the power of democratically-elected school boards (Arsen & Mason, 2013; Morel, 2018), in turn constraining democracy.

Furthermore, as market-based policies became institutionalized in the years post-NCLB, previous social policies aimed at addressing racial inequity and deep concentrations of poverty across the public school system were dismantled (Rooks, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). Notably, in 2007, the Supreme Court ruled in the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* cases that the use of race in school assignments was unconstitutional, and mandated districts to institute color-blind school assignment policies. These cases limited the means through which school district officials could ensure racially integrated schools (Dumas, 2011; Wells & Frankenberg, 2007). In the absence of court-ordered desegregation, and with the expansion of school choice, school districts across the nation have rapidly resegregated (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016).

In the remainder of this section, I discuss how scholars have examined the limits of the market metaphor, or how market-based policies regarding high stakes accountability, school choice, and privatization limit democratic and equitable education.

High-stakes accountability. High-stakes accountability policies operate according to the theory that imposing incentives and sanctions will facilitate improvement in student

achievement. These policies include those that reward and penalize schools based on student test scores, evaluate teachers according to their students' outcomes, close low-performing schools, and replace elected school boards with appointed managers. However, research demonstrates that high-stakes accountability has had mixed impacts on student achievement and has reinforced inequitable schooling for poor students and students of color.

Research on the impact of high-stakes accountability on classroom teaching demonstrate that accountability pressures has had mixed impacts on student achievement and school improvement, and has often led to inequitable learning opportunities, particularly for poor students, students of color, and English language learners (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). For instance, scholars document how teachers working under high-stakes accountability regimes would narrow the curriculum, focusing on preparing students for standardized tests at the expense of learning experiences aimed at nurturing their civic, social, and emotional development (Ravitch, 2010; Trujillo, 2013). In addition, teachers focused most of their efforts on students who promised to achieve high test scores, neglecting lower-performing students (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). In Chicago, Lipman (2011) found that the testing regime led to an increased drop-out rate among Black and Latinx students, demonstrating the shortcomings of accountability policies in expanding equity. Relatedly, researchers have raised concerns that so-called "value added" teacher evaluation metrics, which assess teacher quality based on students' test scores, are based on flawed mathematical models that reveal inconclusive data on teachers' effects on learning (Amrein-Beardsley, 2008).

Research on the impact of accountability policies on school systems illustrates how high-stakes accountability policies lead to disproportionate school closures in poor communities of color (Lipman, 2011; Trujillo & Renée, 2015). Although market logic frames school closure as a necessary means of sanctioning persistently poor performance and advancing equity by enabling students to transfer from low- to higher-performing schools, Lipman (2011) argues that schools in poor neighborhoods were "set up for failure," as they were subject to harsh accountability pressures without accompanying resources or support (p. 52). In primarily occurring across high-poverty urban neighborhoods, school closures reinforce a racially and socioeconomically stratified school system, as the spatial analysis of Lee & Lubienski (2017) illustrates. Meanwhile, in urban locales such as Chicago (Lipman, 2002, 2011) and Philadelphia (Cucchiara, 2013), school closures in high-poverty communities of color have occurred in tandem with public investments in amenities to attract wealthy and White professional families, including public schools offering advanced courses and extracurricular activities. Similarly, Aggarwal and Mayorga (2016) demonstrate how the closure of a Manhattan high school serving primarily low-income students of color began with steady disinvestment in the school and coincided with the influx of White and affluent families into the neighborhood; meanwhile, there was no plan in place for transferring the students to another school. In these ways, school closures do not expand equity, but undermine it. Indeed, scholars demonstrate that local families often oppose school closures. Instead, they regard their neighborhood public schools not as "failures," but rather, as central and beloved community institutions (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016; Ewing, 2018; Lipman, 2011).

The high-stakes accountability movement also informs mayoral (Wong & Shen, 2003) and state (Morel, 2018) takeovers of urban school districts characterized by financial troubles or persistently low student-achievement. Indeed, through its "corrective action" provision, NCLB authorized state takeovers of districts that consistently did not demonstrate improved student

outcomes. Mayoral control and state takeover give mayors and the state government, respectively, the authority to intervene to hold schools and students accountable to performance standards (Wong & Shen, 2003). However, research on the impact of mayoral control and state takeover on student outcomes, including test scores and graduation rates, is inconclusive (Morel, 2018). Moreover, scholars have documented how each of these initiatives undermines democracy not only by wresting power from democratically-elected school boards, but also by enabling "entrepreneurial, market-driven, efficiency-oriented" reforms "without the 'interference' of democratic deliberation" (Lipman, 2011, p. 60). In addition, scholars argue that neither mayoral control nor state takeover are neutral processes, but rather, laden with racial politics, as they each disproportionately impact districts serving students of color. Moreover, mayors often appoint White men from elite backgrounds to serve as school district "managers," who replace elected school boards that often consist of Black and Latinx members (D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Lipman, 2011). Because school board service has historically been a pathway to higher elected political office for Black and Latinx communities, mayoral control and state takeovers effectively serve to politically disempower these populations (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedeseleaux, 1999; Morel, 2018).

School choice. Scholars argue that supporters of school choice policies similarly frame them as democratic, claiming that choice enables parent empowerment (D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Henig, 1994; Lubienski, 2001). However, research demonstrates how choice is not set up to operate democratically. For example, Parent Trigger laws "downplay the ways in which these laws transfer power to private providers or otherwise undermine democratic control of public education" (Rogers et al., 2015, p. 20). Similarly, research reveals that school choice policies are inherently inequitable because the market logic underpinning school choice neglects to address how systemic racism and poverty map onto educational and broader sociopolitical inequities (Margonis & Parker, 1995; Orfield, 2013; Scott & Holme, 2016). In addition, research demonstrates how educational markets operate in unequal ways, privileging certain "consumers" over others (C. A. Bell, 2009; Cucchiara, 2013; Holme, 2002; Lipman, 2011; Roda, 2015).

For example, research on parents as choosers illustrates how middle-class, highly-educated, and wealthy White parents leverage their disproportionate resources and social capital to secure benefits for their own children, illustrating that school choice tends to advantage these parents over poor parents and parents of color (C. A. Bell, 2009; Brown & Makris, 2018; Holme, 2002; Roda, 2015). A complementary body of scholarship illustrates that school choice policies themselves are set up to privilege White and affluent choosers. For instance, Cucchiara (2013) illustrates how the Philadelphia school district aimed to "rebrand" the public schools "to distance them from the rest of the stigmatized school district" in an effort to attract wealthy and White families (p. 67). By privileging certain neighborhood schools and families over others, Cucchiara argues that Philadelphia created a "dual system" of unequal schools (p. 70). Lipman (2002) uncovers similar patterns in Chicago, where the district offered expanded college-preparatory and magnet programs in gentrifying areas to attract White families, while neglecting to provide similar opportunities in Black and Latinx neighborhoods. Other researchers demonstrate that, contrary to what market advocates claim, school choice often fails to operate as a mechanism for advancing equity. For instance, some charter schools and their leaders respond to competition by strategically locating in areas that would enhance their access to students with "desirable" traits, such as affluent, White students with few to no special learning needs (Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009), or selectively recruiting and enrolling such students while excluding those who do not fit this profile (Jabbar, 2015; Welner, 2013).

Privatization. Recall that neoliberal ideology assumes that the public sector is inherently inefficient, and that the private management and provision of public services inevitably results in increased cost-effectiveness and efficiency (Harvey, 2005). In education, policies facilitating privatization are intended to improve student achievement and school quality while minimizing public investment (Burch, 2009). However, the research demonstrates mixed impacts of privatization on improving operational efficiency or student outcomes. For example, in her examination of private firms partnering with public schools to provide operational support, DiMartino (2013) found more a mix of benefits and costs: while private partners brought increased resources and capacity to public schools, their involvement was often accompanied by organizational power struggles and disarray. For-profit EMOs are a more concerning example of the shortcomings of privatization. Indeed, many EMOs have not delivered strong student outcomes, have incurred losses, or have been found to engage in dishonest accounting practices, leading many districts to terminate their EMO contracts (Bracey, 2003). Burch's (2009) investigation of the privatization landscape after NCLB similarly reveals how many private firms prioritized profits over student achievement and viewed the persistent racial achievement gap as a business opportunity.

In addition to constraining equitable public education, private involvement in public education undermines democratic control of schooling, as outside actors, such as appointed district managers or for-profit education management organizations, limit or even eliminate the authority of school boards and disempowers the constituents who democratically elected them (Lipman, 2011). Similarly, scholars have examined how contracting with the private sector for educational services often constrains democratic accountability, or meaningful public input in education policy decisions (DiMartino & Scott, 2012). For example, research documents how private sector involvement in education policymaking is largely hidden from public view (Burch, 2009) or difficult to distinguish from government activities (DiMartino & Scott, 2012). Many scholars critique this lack of transparency, noting that private firms and philanthropic organizations are not elected and hence not subject to any form of public accountability (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Similarly, other scholars demonstrate that private-sector actors are gaining influence in education policymaking, often in ways that will serve their financial interests (Anderson & Donchik, 2016; Bulkley & Burch, 2011; Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012). In addition, the financial and political clout of many private organizations has altered the traditional institutional arrangements and power dynamics surrounding education policymaking. As discussed above, the resulting distribution of power is often inequitable along the lines of race and class (Henig et al., 1999; Morel, 2018). Importantly, Scott (2011) also raises the gender dynamics of privatization, documenting how the private sector individuals gaining political influence are disproportionately White men from outside the communities they serve.

In summary, the market metaphor is accompanied by numerous limitations to racial equity and democracy. The evidence reveals how market-based reforms advancing high-stakes accountability, school choice, and privatization often neglect to improve the academic achievement of poor students and students of color, exacerbating inequitable conditions, particularly in highly stratified urban districts. At the same time, these policies often provide opportunities for private firms to profit (Burch, 2009), as well as privilege White and affluent choosers in the marketplace of schools (Cucchiara, 2013). Finally, accountability, choice, and privatization policies have each contributed to the political disempowerment of high-poverty communities of color, who hold little political influence in decisions related to school closures and governance relative to advocates of market reforms (Lipman, 2011; Morel, 2018; Rooks,

2018). Despite their shortcomings in producing more equitable and democratic schools, market-based policies have become institutionalized as a legitimate mechanism for improving public education, as evidenced by their expansion since the 1980s (Engel, 2000). A key example of the expansive marketization of public education is the rapid growth of charter schools, which I discuss in the following section.

Part IV: The Case of Charter Schools as an Instance of Market-Based Education Reform

The Early Years of the Charter School Movement: Autonomy, Innovation, and Equity

Since its inception in 1991, the charter school movement has been ideologically diverse, encompassing multiple goals (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Wells et al., 1999). For example, some of the earliest charter schools were those established by teachers who wished for greater autonomy from bureaucratic regulations in order to institute innovative curricula and instructional approaches or governance models (Nathan, 1996). Researchers have highlighted how charter schools, as institutions unfettered from the central school district bureaucracy, have allowed communities to design various dimensions of schooling, including operations, curriculum, instruction, and enrollment, around visions of expanding racial and socioeconomic equity and democratic engagement. As Scott (2018) explains, many early advocates of charter schools viewed charters as a vehicle for advancing equity, empowerment, and the realization of civil rights by generating more equitable educational opportunities for communities of color long underserved by the traditional public school system. She writes:

> Some advocates argued that charter schools would disrupt the connection between where students lived and where they attended school and, as such, would create more racial and ethnic diversity than was possible under neighborhood zoned schools. Other advocates posited that charter schools would give parents of color greater choice and voice and thereby power over their children's schooling. (p. 206)

To illustrate how some charters are oriented around racial equity, in their multi-year, qualitative study of charter schools in 10 California districts, Wells et al. (1999) document how many communities, unsatisfied with the fact that state-run public schools did not incorporate their history and culture in the curriculum, developed ethnocentric charter schools oriented around students' racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages. Other ethnocentric or so-called "niche" charter schools similarly serve students of color historically marginalized by the public school system (Fox & Buchanan, 2014; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004). Leaders of ethnocentric charters often aim for their schools to be liberatory educational spaces for communities of color (Wilson, 2016). In this way, ethnocentric or niche charters are arguably rooted in earlier generations of politically progressive educational movements, such as the Freedom Schools and Free Schools of the 1960s and 1970s (Forman, 2005; Perlstein, 2002).

Scholars have broadly conceptualized charters such as those discussed above as "mission-oriented," as they are underpinned by a particular pedagogical, social, or political mission (Henig, Holyoke, Brown, & Lacireno-Paquet, 2005; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). Huerta and d'Entremont (2010) describe mission-oriented charters as those "created to serve specific student populations or educational missions" (p. 131). In their comparative study of three New York City charter schools, they identify as mission-oriented a dual-language charter

school partnered with a local community organization aimed at serving the city's Dominican population. As Henig et al., (2005) similarly explain, mission-oriented charters often emerge from the concerns and needs of local communities and might be "launched by teachers animated by particular pedagogical visions [or] by parents driven by dissatisfaction with bureaucratic rules and regulations" (p. 491).

However, as I discuss in detail below, as the charter school movement evolved, it became less tied to autonomy, innovation, equity, and specific educational or sociopolitical missions. Rather, charter schools became increasingly defined by and aligned with market values.

The Marketization of Charter Schools: Accountability, Choice, and Privatization

Knight Abowitz and Karaba (2010) argue that charter schools, given their autonomy from bureaucratic regulations, are uniquely positioned to institute practices that would advance equity and *democratic justice*, or a meaningful connection to the community to which they are held accountable. Yet they contend that democratic justice is only minimally invoked across the charter movement, and instead, *libertarian justice*, informed by neoliberal tenets and free-market values, disproportionately informs and shapes charter school policy. Indeed, as the charter movement matured throughout the 1990s and first few years of the twenty-first century, it became a key element of policies and reforms related to high-stakes accountability, school choice, and privatization. In becoming increasingly market-oriented, the charter sector as a whole became distanced from many of its mission-oriented and equity-focused underpinnings. For instance, charter school policies largely lack provisions to ensure racial or socioeconomic diversity (Scott & Holme, 2016) and do not attend to the contextual conditions that impact charter school students' achievement (Scott & Villavicencio, 2009). Indeed, scholars have highlighted how charters contribute to racial segregation (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011) and often neglect to serve students with special learning needs or limited English proficiency (Miron, Urschel, & Saxton, 2011; Welner, 2013), despite advocates' claims that charter schools advance civil rights (Scott, 2013a).

Scholars have documented the various ways in which charters have become linked to a market-oriented policy agenda. For example, Wells (2002) argues that neoliberal charter advocates have held disproportionate political influence dating to the early years of the charter school movement, and have successfully shaped charter school policy around free-market enthusiasm for the standards movement, market-based reform, and local control. Post-NCLB, policymakers and advocates embraced charter schools as an ideal school turnaround option for public schools failing to meet AYP, and, in many districts under mayoral control or state takeover, such as New York City, New Orleans, and Chicago, mayors or state governors facilitated the expansion of charters to replace shuttered public schools (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011). In addition, policymakers and politically influential philanthropists effectively linked charter schools to public discourses around the benefits of empowering parents through expanded school choice, particularly for families in high-poverty urban areas "trapped" in the "failing" local public schools (D. Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Scott, 2013b).

Furthermore, against the backdrop of broad acceptance of neoliberal ideology, charter schools became increasingly tied to educational privatization. Indeed, whereas the earliest charters were founded and managed by educators, families, and local communities, charters are increasingly operated by for-profit and nonprofit management organizations seeking to infuse business principles into the education sector via the charter school model (Scott, 2009). Those at the helm of such organizations view charters as an ideal vehicle for efficiently improving public

education by replacing inefficient public bureaucracies with privately managed schools. As Henig (2018) observes, "charters offered an important market for the entry of private providers… in part because [charters] are less constrained than elected school boards by the pressure to contract with groups with local roots" (p. 18). Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that wealthy individuals or private firms are better positioned relative to small community-based organizations to found a charter school, given the financial resources needed at the outset (Scott & Holme, 2002; Wells, 2002).

The contemporary marketization of charter schools is perhaps best exemplified by the expansion of nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs). CMOs operate "networks" of charter schools via a central office as a means of "scaling up" the charter sector efficiently and rapidly serving increasing numbers of students, in turn achieving economies of scale (Farrell et al., 2012; Lake et al., 2010; Quinn et al., 2016). CMOs have particularly focused on locating in urban districts disproportionately serving poor students and students of color (Scott & Holme, 2016). While independent charters outnumber CMOs nationally, the expansion of CMOs has far outpaced that of independent charters. In 2015, over half of charter schools nationally were unaffiliated with any management organization (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016). However, from 2005 to 2015, the number of CMOs in the United States more than doubled, from 674 to 1,882 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Scholars have likened CMO replication to that of commercial retail chains (White, 2018).

CMO Advocacy Coalitions: Altering the Political Landscape of School Reform

Growing political support for CMOs as a preferred mechanism for reforming education has been possible due to politically powerful advocacy coalitions. These coalitions comprise an array of politically and financially robust interest groups, often from the private sector, including philanthropists, advocacy organizations, and other intermediary organizations (IOs), working in tandem to promote a policy agenda that would facilitate unfettered charter expansion through the CMO model (DeBray, Scott, Lubienski, & Jabbar, 2014). One such organization, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2009), identifies states with "model charter school laws" as those that advance a deregulated charter school environment and place no limits on charter school growth, so that states may "[encourage] replication of high-performing charter schools… through the creation of nonprofit charter management organizations and for-profit education management organizations" (pp. 5–6). This organization, and others, actively engage in the political arena to push a charter-friendly policy landscape (DeBray et al., 2014). Meanwhile, traditional education interest groups, such as teachers' unions, local civic groups, and other community stakeholders, have seen their political power and influence diminish (Henig, 2010, 2013).

In this sub-section, I discuss scholarship on the rise of CMO advocacy coalitions, and how these coalitions alter the political and power dynamics surrounding school reform, especially in poor urban areas. I describe the various types of coalitional actors, including foundations and other intermediary organizations. I then discuss how the rise and growing political influence of charter school advocacy coalitions impact racial equity and democratic accountability.

The role of philanthropy. A growing body of research attends to the role of philanthropy in coalitions advocating for CMO expansion (Au & Ferrare, 2014; Ferrare & Setari, 2018; Quinn et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). Philanthropic organizations, such as the Broad, Gates, and Walton Foundations, view CMOs as an ideal "investment," as the model

promises high "returns" in the form of student outcomes and sector growth. These philanthropic groups are known as "venture philanthropists," which, like venture capitalists in the private sector, invest in educational "ventures" that have been proven to yield high returns. Venture philanthropists generally have no experience in education and aim to apply theories and practices from the corporate world to school reform (Scott, 2009). They are especially attracted to the CMO model, rather than to independent charter schools, as they deem CMOs to be ideal mechanisms for efficiently and rapidly bringing the charter sector to scale (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Moreover, many venture philanthropists financially support the same CMOs, a pattern described by Reckhow and Snyder (2014) as "convergent grant-making" (p. 3). Support for CMOs has become a prominent issue in local school board elections around the country, attracting the attention and contributions of national actors, including wealthy donors, such as Michael Bloomberg and Eli Broad, who live outside the communities where the elections are held (Reckhow, Henig, Jacobsen, & Litt, 2016).

In addition to funding CMOs themselves, venture philanthropists operate in coalitions to fund various charter school support organizations. For example, the Broad, Fisher, Gates, and Walton Foundations are among the largest financial contributors to Teach For America (TFA), an alternative teacher certification program that places many of its recruits in CMOs. The Broad Foundation also operates a leadership program for urban school superintendents and CMO managers (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014). And the New Schools Venture Fund (NSVF), a venture philanthropy firm, has invested heavily in numerous CMOs and various alternative teacher preparation programs, including TFA and Relay Graduate School of Education, which was founded in partnership with three CMOs (Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). Finally, many philanthropists and other actors from the private sector sit on CMOs' governing boards, and in this way, serve as conduits for political and financial resources (Quinn et al., 2016).

The role of other intermediary organizations. Research demonstrates how philanthropists work in coalition with various intermediary organizations, such as think tanks, education advocacy and reform organizations, and news media organizations, to facilitate policy environments favorable to charter school expansion, particularly through the CMO approach (DeBray et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2017). For example, funding from major foundations has been key to the operations of national political organizations, such as Democrats for Education Reform and 50CAN, that advocate for charter school expansion (McGuinn, 2012). Further, Au and Ferrare (2014) illustrate how the Gates Foundation and other philanthropists used their financial and political clout to advocate successfully for the enactment of charter school legislation in Washington State. On the local level, in urban school districts such as New Orleans and Chicago, foundations have worked in tandem with policymakers and education reformers to restructure the public school system in ways that facilitate charter school expansion (Buras, 2011; DeBray et al., 2014; Lipman, 2011).

Scholars also attribute the policy influence of foundations and other IOs to their roles as "knowledge brokers," producing and disseminating to policymakers research evidence that casts charter school expansion favorably, despite the fact that much peer-reviewed research on the effects of charter schools on student achievement is mixed (DeBray et al., 2014, p. 183). For example, studying foundation and IO activity in Denver, New Orleans, and New York City, Scott and Jabbar (2014) find that foundation support has played a critical role in the growth of the IO sector, the capacity of IOs to produce research evidence demonstrating the efficacy of charters and other market reforms, and the ability of IOs disseminate this research to policymakers. Finally, in a stark illustration of the networked environment of charter school

advocacy and policy, many individuals with ties to charter school funding and advocacy organizations later assumed prominent roles in education policymaking. These included NSVF Chief Operating Officer Joanne Weiss, who served as former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Chief of Staff, and Louisiana State Superintendent John White, an alumnus of TFA and the Broad Foundation's education leadership program (Kretchmar et al., 2014; Mehta & Teles, 2011).

Impacts on equity and democracy. Some researchers argue that the financial and political clout of charter school advocacy coalitions marginalizes the voices of those opposed to charter school expansion, notably, poor communities and communities of color, who are disproportionately impacted by charter school expansion (Oluwole & Green, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). For example, in urban school districts such as New Orleans and Chicago, pro-charter philanthropists and education reformers worked in tandem with elected officials to expand the charter sector, despite widespread community opposition (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011). Scholars have similarly raised concerns that charter advocacy coalitions, given their resources and political clout, wield disproportionate political influence and in turn constrain democratic decision-making among historically disenfranchised populations (Scott, 2009, 2011). This body of scholarship aligns with studies demonstrating that education reform initiatives remain fragile when politically and financially robust coalitions privilege business interests and a privatization agenda while neglecting the interests of poor communities of color (Ansell, Reckhow, & Kelly, 2009; Gold et al., 2007; Henig et al., 1999; Shipps, 2003; Stone, 1989).

Researchers have also demonstrated that pro-charter reformers, philanthropists, and advocates, which often operate with minimal financial transparency, have underlying profit motives. In their qualitative research on Chicago and New Orleans, Lipman (2002, 2011) and Buras (2011), respectively, each argue that state disinvestment in education opened a profitable public education "market" to wealthy and White entrepreneurs and facilitated the proliferation of charter schools, despite community resistance. Their work is part of a broader body of critical research arguing that these efforts were motivated by racialized policies, as state disinvestment disproportionately impacted working class Black and Latinx communities, whose schools were subsequently deemed "failures" according to supposedly race-neutral standardized test scores, thus justifying charter takeover (Ewing, 2018; Rooks, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). A related line of scholarship critiques the discursive strategies of CMO advocacy coalitions, which rhetorically connect charter schools to the Civil Rights Movement, despite research demonstrating that many charters perpetuate racial segregation and inequity (Scott, 2013a).

Together, this scholarship counters claims advanced among charter school advocates that market competition and choice expand educational opportunity, narrow the achievement gap, and broaden the civil rights of historically disenfranchised populations (Scott, 2013a). These disproportionate impacts on communities of color have led the NAACP and the Movement for Black Lives to pass resolutions in 2016 critiquing market-based choice and charter schools and to call for a moratorium on charter school expansion (Zernike, 2016).

Part V: The Possibilities for Progressive Reform in a Market-Based Political Environment

This chapter discussed the rise of neoliberal ideology, tracing its roots to Title I of the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Although Title I was ostensibly equity-oriented in expanding federal support for the education of poor students, it also marked the beginning of federal disinvestment in social welfare and an emphasis on the economic, rather than equity,

goals of public education (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). In subsequent years, conservative think tanks and other ideologues actively shaped a policy agenda that further dismantled state investment in social welfare and facilitated the deregulation of public services, including education, under the assumption that the private sector is more effective and efficient than the public sector (Sclar, 2000). By the 1980s, neoliberal ideology had become firmly rooted in the policy arena, and has since informed the design of market-oriented educational policies, including those that advance standards-based reform, school choice, and privatization (Engel, 2000; Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011). These policies aim to improve student achievement and school quality through the market mechanisms of accountability, competition, choice, and individual achievement (Engel, 2000). However, a major shortcoming of these policies is that they do not address how systemic racial, social, and economic inequities map onto public education (Carter & Welner, 2013). Hence, many market-based policies have had the effect of perpetuating or even exacerbating inequitable schooling, particularly in racially and socioeconomically stratified urban communities (Rooks, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). Moreover, the expansion of market-based policies has led to diminished democratic equality and political empowerment across poor communities and communities of color, as managerial governance models replace democratic ones (Lipman, 2011; Morel, 2018).

Although charter schools are one example of a reform initiative oriented around market tenets, the charter school movement has been an "ideologically big tent" from its inception, underpinned by both liberal progressive and neoliberal market tenets, though its market-oriented iteration has come to dominate with the robust support of neoliberal advocates (Knight Abowitz & Karaba, 2010, p. 539). Scholars argue that independent, community-based charters, more so than their market-oriented counterparts, are uniquely positioned to advance a progressive, equity-oriented agenda, because they tend to be founded upon equity- and democracy-oriented pedagogical, social, or political missions more so than the market values of accountability, choice, privatization, and economies of scale (Henig et al., 2005; Wells, 2002). For example, Welner (2013) demonstrates how some charters aim specifically to serve an at-risk student population, such as students with severe disabilities. In addition, scholars have examined how some charter school leaders leverage their autonomy to explicitly focus on enrolling racially diverse populations (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012; Potter, Quick, & Davies, 2016; Villavicencio, 2016). Other charters institute an ethnocentric approach, established by, and focused on meeting the needs of, communities of color historically marginalized by the traditional public school system (Fox & Buchanan, 2014; Rofes & Stulberg, 2004; Wells et al., 1999; Wilson, 2016).

Yet the literature also demonstrates that the progressive, equity-oriented missions of independent charters are fragile in a market-based policy and political context oriented around neoliberal ideology. This neoliberal context elevates market tenets over democratic ones (Engel, 2000), incentivizing charter schools to respond to market competition by, for instance, pursuing a growth strategy (Quinn et al., 2016), garnering private funding (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010), and enacting selective enrollment policies (Jabbar, 2015, Welner, 2013). For example, scholars have examined how market pressures compelled a dual-language charter school to compromise its innovative teaching practices in order to appear institutionally legitimate and attract philanthropic funding (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). White (2018) similarly documents how independent, community-based charters in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City were pushed to adopt a data-driven, test-oriented instructional approach in order to attract resources, thus constraining teachers' autonomy and innovation. Together, this research demonstrates that a

market-oriented policy context stifles the progressive founding missions of many independent charters and instead incentivizes practices aligned with market values.

To date, the extant literature on independent charter schools founded upon progressive missions demonstrates the link between schools' *internal* pedagogical and operational practices and their ability to survive in a market context. For instance, as noted above, scholars find that some progressive charters adjust their curricular foci to attract private funding (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; White, 2018), or design their admissions policies in order to maximize the enrollment of high-performing students (Welner, 2013). Yet independent charters' *external* activities, or how they engage in the political arena to mobilize political, financial, and ideological support to maximize organizational survival, remains under-examined. Scholars have demonstrated that political mobilization among CMO advocates has been critical to the rapid rate of CMO expansion (DeBray et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2017). However, we know little about whether, and to what extent, independent charter school leaders and advocates engage in similar political activity to secure support for their progressive missions.

This study extends the research on the politics of charter schools by investigating how independent charter school leaders and advocates mobilized political, financial, and ideological support for their schools' progressive missions in a market-oriented political environment. I examined the relationship between independent charters' internal and external practices, or how schools' pedagogical, operational, and political practices were intertwined. In doing so, I shed light on the possibilities for a progressive, equity- and democracy-oriented education reform agenda in a neoliberal landscape, and the conditions under which such an agenda can take place.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework: What Charter Schools Do, Have, and Know to Survive in a Market-Oriented Context

In this chapter, I present this study's conceptual framework for explaining how independent charter schools founded upon progressive tenets maximize organizational survival in the competitive market environment. This framework draws upon the empirical literature to explain what charter schools "do," "have," and "know" in order to survive, and is modeled after Scott and Villavicencio's (2009) conceptual framework for explaining charter schools' student achievement outcomes. Scott and Villavicencio's framework draws from the empirical literature to highlight what charter schools: (a) do, or their practices related to curriculum, admissions, and governance; (b) have, or their resources; and (c) know, or the knowledge and capacity of school leaders, staff, and board trustees. In accounting for the relationship across these three dimensions, Scott and Villavicencio illuminate how in-school factors interact with contextual conditions to shape charter students' academic performance, providing a nuanced and holistic view of how charter schools impact student achievement.

Similarly, I incorporate these three dimensions in a framework that draws upon the empirical literature to explain what market-oriented charters do, have, and know in order to survive and retain a competitive edge in the market context. This framework allowed me to identify whether, and to what extent, independent charters founded upon progressive values exhibited similar practices, resources, and capacities, in turn adapting to the market context and experiencing "mission drift" (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014; Weisbrod, 2004). The framework also enabled me to see how, if at all, progressive charters displayed alternative practices, resources, and capacities in order to maximize organizational survival while maintaining fidelity to their founding missions. Finally, the framework attends to the equity implications of what charters do, have, and know, and enabled an investigation of how independent charters' efforts to survive advance or constrain equitable education.

In this chapter, I first present this study's conceptual framework, discussing the literature on what market-oriented charters do, know, and have to stay alive in the competitive market environment. Next, I discuss how incorporating this framework with the construct of mission drift allowed me to see whether, and to what extent, independent charters maintain, or drift from, their founding progressive values in the effort to maximize organizational survival.

Part I: Hallmarks of Market-Oriented Charters Schools: What Charters Do, Have, and Know

Market theory stipulates that competitive effects will eliminate low-quality schools and ensure the survival of the most successful and high-quality schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990). The empirical research documents the various traits and tactics charters exhibit in order to advance their competitive advantage and survival prospects. In particular, market-oriented charter schools (a) enact specific internal practices, (b) access particular kinds of human capital, financial, and political resources, and (c) possess particular areas of expertise to inform organizational capacity and practice. In this section, I review the literature on what charter schools do, know, and have in order to survive and remain competitive in the market context. I also discuss some of the

critiques surrounding these practices, particularly the ways in which these practices undermine equitable education. Table 1 summarizes the components of this framework.

Do	Have	Know
Selective enrollment	Affiliation with management organization	Outcomes-oriented pedagogy and discipline
Strategic marketing and advertising	Access to high-status donors	Managerial expertise
Replication and expansion	Relationships with alternative teacher and leader preparation programs	How to network and build alliances across sectors
	Support from political advocacy coalitions	

Table 1. A framework for explaining charter school survival in the market context

What Market-Oriented Charters Do: Internal Organizational Practices

Selective enrollment. One common practice among charters is to selectively enroll students in response to accountability pressures and market competition, maximizing their enrollment of high-achieving students. As Welner (2013) describes, "Given the high-stakes accountability context, a school designed to serve an at-risk population will face greater survival obstacles. Low test scores lead to lower school performance ratings and eventually to closure" (p. 2). Indeed, many charters, particularly CMOs, do not equitably serve students with disabilities or English language learners (Baker & Ferris, 2011; Welner, 2013) and have high attrition rates (Miron et al., 2011; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2011). For example, studies of the national CMO KIPP illustrate that, while KIPP boasts academic success in the form of high test scores, it also experiences high rates of student attrition, suggesting that low-performing students are pushed out of KIPP schools over time (Heilig, Williams, McNeil, & Lee, 2011; Miron et al., 2011). The Success Academy CMO in New York City exhibits similar attrition patterns: its first class of seniors graduated in 2018, but this cohort of students had reduced in number from 73 to 16 since they entered Success Academy in 2006 (Veiga, 2018). As evidence of Success Academy's selective enrollment practices, the media has recently reported on instances where the CMO appeared to push out low-performing students or those deemed difficult to educate, including by maintaining a list of students who have "got to go" (Taylor, 2015c). Researchers have documented high attrition rates particularly among students of color, whom charter schools disproportionately suspend and expel (Losen, Keith, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016).

However, selective enrollment is not only about pushing out low-performing students, but also selectively enrolling high-performing ones. Indeed, Jabbar's (2015) research in New Orleans reveals that charter leaders enact both "cropping" and "cream-skimming" strategies. For instance, principals do not advertise open seats so as not to enroll low-performing students, as well as coordinate targeted recruitment efforts, such as "invite-only open houses," for students with records of previous academic achievement (p. 650). Similarly, in their spatial analysis, Lubienski, Gulosino, and Weitzel (2009) illustrate how some charters in Detroit, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C., strategically locate in areas that would enhance their access to students with "desirable" traits, such as affluent, White students with few to no special learning needs and with records of high academic performance. However, these locational strategies reinforce racial and socioeconomic stratification already existing in these cities. Together, these selective enrollment practices demonstrate that many charters actually limit educational opportunity for

low-performing students and historically disadvantaged communities rather than expand equitable access, and that a progressive definition of equity is vulnerable in an accountability-driven and competitive market context.

Strategic marketing and advertising. A related and growing body of research demonstrates that charter schools respond to competition through strategic marketing and advertising to attract "customers." As Lubienski (2001) explains, "Being placed in a competitive market, charter schools have an added incentive to manage perceptions in order to appear to potential consumers in a favorable light" (p. 656). Yet the research also demonstrates how charters' efforts to advance their market position through marketing and advertising undermines equity. For example, Jabbar's (2015) research in New Orleans documents that the targeted recruitment efforts described above are part of broader marketing initiatives designed to attract students with desirable traits, such as records of previous academic achievement. Similarly, Hernández (2016) demonstrates how CMOs engage in a variety of online marketing practices laced with race-based messaging that reinforces a deficit-oriented view of poor students and students of color, yet also "celebrates the CMO's proactive role in changing the odds for marginalized communities," in turn casting their organizations positively (p. 59). Related research from Wilson and Carlsen (2016) documents how charter websites, a primary marketing tool, employ discursive frames of race and culture, hence "[acting] as one mechanism shaping the segmentation of a local marketplace of school options" and reinforcing inequitable educational access along race and class lines (p. 40). DiMartino and Jessen (2018) further illustrate how many CMOs spend large sums of money on marketing and so-called "ed-vertising" activities, including purchasing advertisement space in public locations, designing online marketing materials, and hiring professionals to produce marketing videos. They argue that ed-vertising represents a high portion of CMOs' operating expenses, and raise concerns that these funds are taking away those that would otherwise support teaching and learning.

Together, the growing research on CMO marketing suggests that market values render public education not a public good, but rather, a private good to be marketed to and consumed by families. In addition, these scholars raise ethical concerns regarding the fact that CMOs' strategic marketing disproportionately targets poor communities of color and is often racially-coded (Hernández, 2016). Finally, this research critiques the lack of public transparency around charters' marketing practices, as charters' marketing expenses derive in part from taxpayer dollars, yet their marketing activities are often not publicly disclosed (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018).

Replication and expansion. An additional practice charters employ to advance their market position is the pursuit of replication and expansion. As exemplified by the CMO model, a market environment incentivizes charters to replicate and expand in order to capture a larger segment of choosers in the choice market and achieve a competitive advantage over smaller charters (Farrell et al., 2012; Lake et al., 2010; Quinn et al., 2016). For example, charter school leaders in the competitive New Orleans market added grade levels and developed strategic partnerships in order to expand their operations (Jabbar, 2015). Arguably, these and similar charter leaders are responding to a political and policy environment rooted in market logic and widespread faith in business practices around the benefits of organizational expansion. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, charters with explicit expansion strategies disproportionately attract funding from venture philanthropists, who measure success in terms of sector growth (Quinn et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). The federal Charter Schools Program has also provided financial incentives for charter replication and expansion (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

In addition, large charter networks are better resourced to build a recognizable brand that would further attract resources, political support, and prospective families (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018). Proponents of charter growth similarly argue that, in capturing a sizeable share of the public school market, charters will exert competitive pressures on public school systems broadly to improve in quality (Quinn et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). Yet researchers also point out that, when charters scale up rapidly, they may compromise quality. For instance, in their investigation of California CMOs, Meyerson, Berger, and Quinn (2010) and Quinn et al. (2016) highlight how some charters struggled to maintain high levels of academic achievement and recruit and retain quality teachers during the rapid expansion process.

What Market-Oriented Charters Have: Organizational, Human Capital, Financial, and Political Resources

Affiliation with management organizations and other external partners. One way charters endeavor to advance their survival prospects is by affiliating with a management organization or other external partner. Given varying levels of local and state funding and other resources for charter schools, affiliating with a for-profit or nonprofit management organization or other external partner facilitates increased access to organizational, human capital, and financial resources (Ascher et al., 2001; Farrell et al., 2012; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Smith, & Hentschke, 2004). For example, in an early investigation of New York City charters, Ascher et al. (2001) found that management organizations and external partners lent critical operational support in areas such as accounting, payroll, and student supports, which school districts extend to traditional public schools, but not to charter schools. Management organizations also bring access to much-needed financial resources. For instance, compared to independent charters, Huerta and d'Entremont (2010) found that a charter affiliated with an education management organization (EMO) had little need to fundraise. Rather, the EMO's own institutional partnerships facilitated access to sufficient funding. Similarly, Wohlstetter et al. (2004) illustrated how nonprofit entities, such as arts and cultural organizations and civic groups, provide curriculum support and various social services; and many churches share their facilities. Moreover, some strategic partnerships with well-respected or politically influential organizations help to enhance charters' political clout and legitimacy, particularly in contexts where the public views charters with some skepticism (Ascher et al., 2001; Wohlstetter et al., 2004).

Similarly, research on CMOs highlights how this model is designed to centralize operational tasks and expenses to achieve organizational capacity and efficiency (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). As Farrell et al., explain, CMOs employ a "network structure to increase organizational capacity" (p. 504). To illustrate, CMOs maintain a central "home office," which offers ongoing support to all affiliated schools in areas including human resources, development, financial management, facilities, and legal compliance. According to Farrell et al., "by concentrating these responsibilities in a centralized management team, principals and school leaders are then able to concentrate on their responsibilities as instructional leaders at the school site" (p. 506). In this way, CMOs, like EMOs and other external partners with which charter schools affiliate, increase charters' organizational and financial capacity, maximizing their competitive edge in the charter market. However, scholars highlight that a key shortcoming of such partnerships is that their established organizational approaches may constrain charters' efforts at curricular or organizational innovation (Huerta, 2009; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). In

addition, CMOs' centralized curricula and pedagogical approaches limit teacher autonomy and professionalism, contributing to their dissatisfaction (Torres, 2014).

Access to high-status and well-endowed donors. As noted above, varying levels of public funding for charter schools, particularly during the start-up years, often necessitates private fundraising (Scott & Holme, 2002). Researchers have demonstrated that charters underpinned by market tenets, particularly CMOs, enjoy disproportionate access relative to mom-and-pop charters to high-status, high-net-worth donors, particularly those who made their fortunes in the private sector (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002). Indeed, as Scott (2009) explains, venture philanthropic organizations such as the Broad, Gates, and Walton Foundations "often believe that educational reform could greatly benefit from the strategies and principles that contributed to their financial successes in the private sector. As such, they tend to favor market-based hallmarks such as competition, standardization, and high-stakes accountability" in charter schools (p. 107). As noted above, venture philanthropists favor CMOs as a particularly worthwhile investment, as they promise high returns in the form of student achievement and sector growth (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016; Scott, 2009).

However, it is not only funders who seek out charter ventures in which to invest; charters also seek out well-endowed funders, given the financial challenges of operating solely on public funds (Scott & Holme, 2002). Research investigating charter schools in New York City illustrates how public funding constraints compelled school leaders to seek out nonprofit institutional partners, which brought both operational and financial support (Ascher et al., 2001; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). More recently, as Jabbar (2015) discusses in her investigation of New Orleans charter leaders, accessing private funds is a common strategy leaders employ to remain competitive and "to buffer against the uncertainties of the market and the effects of competition" (p. 646). High-status charters, such as those with brand-name recognition, are more likely to access funds from wealthy donors, as these charters' social status affords them access to well-endowed social and philanthropic networks (Scott & Holme, 2002). Notably, CMOs, with their central home office staff, are more likely to have an in-house grant-writer or development director on hand to market the school to potential donors (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018).

Relationships with alternative teacher and leader preparation programs. Another critical resource to which market-oriented charters have access are alternative teacher and leader preparation programs. These programs, such as Teach For America (TFA), were initially designed to expand the teaching force by placing recent college graduates in high-needs schools. Yet researchers have demonstrated that TFA has expanded its agenda since its founding in 1991, including by providing critical support to charter schools and charter school policies grounded in market principles. For example, TFA has established partnerships with many CMOs, facilitating a steady pipeline of TFA teachers, or "corps members," into CMO schools. These partnerships are reinforced by venture philanthropists, such as the Gates Foundation, who fund both TFA and many CMOs (Kretchmar et al., 2014; Trujillo, Scott, & Rivera, 2017). Moreover, numerous CMOs, particularly those subscribing to the no-excuses model, were founded by TFA alumni and continue to be staffed by current or former TFA corps members (Kretchmar et al., 2014). In this way, TFA facilitates the growth not only of individual CMO networks, but also the CMO sector as a whole, rendering CMOs "market leaders" within the charter landscape (Farrell et al., 2012). Similar alternative certification programs, such as The New Teacher Project and New Leaders, complement TFAs' contributions to CMO growth, as their alumni go on to teach in, lead, and found CMOs (Kretchmar et al., 2014). For instance, the Relay Graduate School for Education, founded by three CMOs in New York and funded by venture philanthropists, has

since expanded its teacher and leadership training programs, partnering with CMOs across the country to place its trainees at their schools (Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015).

TFA and similar alternative certification programs provide not only human capital support, but also political support to advocacy efforts aimed at advancing market-oriented charter policies. Indeed, TFA has emerged as a prominent actor within charter advocacy networks, connecting personnel and funding to organizations, such as Students First and Democrats for Education Reform, advancing policies that facilitate charter expansion (Kretchmar et al., 2014). These political actors advance a policy narrative rooted in neoliberal ideology, blaming the achievement gap not on systemic racial, social, or economic inequities, but on a bureaucratic education system lacking in managerial expertise and sufficient parental access to choice (Trujillo et al., 2017).

Political support from charter school advocacy coalitions. Finally, a key resource held among market-oriented charter schools is their support from politically powerful charter school advocacy organizations. Alternative teacher and leader certification programs such as TFA comprise one component of coalitions lending political support to market-oriented charters, particularly CMOs. As discussed in Chapter 2, a robust and coordinated network of intermediary organizations actively engages in the policy arena to advance charter school policy (DeBray et al., 2014; McGuinn, 2012; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Scott & Jabbar, 2014). Venture philanthropists are at the center of these networks, not only supporting charter schools directly, but also many of the intermediary organizations and think tanks that produce and disseminate research casting market-oriented charters favorably, particularly in terms of their positive effects on student achievement (Scott & Jabbar, 2014; Scott, Jabbar, La Londe, DeBray, & Lubienski, 2015). Venture philanthropic organizations also fund and convene meetings designed to bring intermediary organizations together to exchange ideas and coordinate political tactics (McGuinn, 2012). Furthermore, some intermediary organizations, such as Students First, operate parallel political action committees (PACs) that contribute to the campaigns of political candidates, demonstrating these advocates' direct influence on policy (Mahoney & Shapiro, 2014; McGuinn, 2012). Moreover, researchers have documented a "revolving door" linking the charter advocacy and policy landscapes, with intermediary organization staff later assuming policy positions and vice versa (Mehta & Teles, 2011).

The collective power of these charter advocacy coalitions has effectively facilitated the enactment of policies that encourage the growth of market-oriented charters. For example, in New York State, charter-friendly PACs, such as those controlled by Democrats for Education Reform and Families for Excellent Schools, have been among the top contributors to political campaigns since 2014. Their contributions helped to elect a Governor and State Legislature that passed legislation designed to allow the charter sector to expand by eliminating the state charter cap and requiring public rental assistance to charter schools in private facilities (Mahoney, 2017; Mahoney & Shapiro, 2014). Similarly, in New Orleans, a political coalition comprising foundations and education reform organizations has facilitated the creation of a policy environment amenable to charter school growth, and charters have come to comprise the majority of public schools in the city (Buras, 2011; Kretchmar et al., 2014).

What Market-Oriented Charters Know: Ideas and Expertise to Inform Practice

Outcomes-oriented pedagogical and disciplinary practices. One characteristic of many market-oriented charters, particularly CMOs, is their no-excuses approach to pedagogy and discipline (Lake et al., 2010). No-excuses pedagogy revolves around the idea of "sweating

the small stuff," or requiring compliance with an array of behavioral rules, ranging from uniform policies to specifications about how to sit in one's desk, and penalizing a failure to comply with such rules (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013). Advocates argue that no-excuses pedagogy minimizes distractions from learning and cultivates students' discipline and focus, in turn maximizing their academic success (Lemov, 2010, 2015). Research demonstrates that charter leaders and advocates perceive outcomes-oriented practices as one way to improve a charter's market position. For instance, Jabbar (2015) finds that some charter leaders in New Orleans respond to competitive pressures by instituting curricular changes, including those aimed at improving test scores, as a means of attracting or retaining students.

However, scholars have demonstrated that no-excuses pedagogy produces "worker learners" adept at complying with rules at the expense of facilitating opportunities for students to engage in deep inquiry and self-directed learning (Golann, 2015). Similarly, researchers have noted how no-excuses pedagogy, while effective at producing impressive student test scores, neglects to address students' civic, social, or emotional learning and falls short of developing students' agency (Torres & Golann, 2018). As Goodman (2013) explains, within the highly-controlled learning environments at many CMOs, "children's initiative is suppressed in favor of conformity, autonomy in favor of heteronomy. The goal is to meet performance criteria, while internal interests remain unexpressed and unexplored" (p. 91). Researchers have also critiqued the racial equity implications of a no-excuses approach to pedagogy and discipline, as schools that institute these practices disproportionately serve students of color while its teachers, as well as CMO network leaders, tend to be White. As Terrenda White (2015) argues, "Cultural dimensions of Whiteness are visible in many no-excuses practices, which go beyond benign instructions for improving character values and behaviors of young pupils, and indeed convey racialized cultural biases about right and wrong social norms" (p. 141). Finally, scholars have also noted that a no-excuses environment, given its prescriptiveness, minimizes teacher autonomy and leads to high levels of teacher burn-out (Torres, 2014). In short, although highly regulated learning environments may contribute to student achievement and hence advance charters' competitive position in the market, a no-excuses approach imposes numerous negative and inequitable effects on students and teachers.

Managerial expertise. An additional area of knowledge held among market-oriented charters is managerial expertise. Since the nineteenth century, education reformers have looked to business experts to improve the efficient operations of public schools (Scott, 2008; Trujillo, 2014; Tyack, 1974). This faith in managerialism has only deepened amid the growth of neoliberal ideology in education policy and politics, as neoliberalism assumes that infusing private sector practices will improve the bureaucratic politics that impede the efficacy of public services such as education. Accordingly, many urban charters, particularly those affiliated with EMOs and CMOs, are founded and led by business professionals with little to no experience in public education (Scott, 2008; Trujillo, 2014). As noted above, many TFA alumni have founded CMOs after limited years of experience as classroom teachers, largely motivated to address educational inequity through managerial approaches (Trujillo et al., 2017). Moreover, as Quinn et al. (2016) find, CMOs often target business school graduates to lead their organizations, and the Broad Foundation's leadership residency recruits and trains management professionals to assume charter leadership positions. Quinn et al., similarly point out that, across CMOs, "job titles adopted from the corporate world (e.g., 'chief operating officer') reflected and signaled [their] inclusion and embrace of managerial expertise" (p. 28). Notably, as Scott (2008) argues, these "managers of choice" tend to be White and male while the students they serve are

disproportionately Black and Latinx, signaling that business leaders hold racially-laden assumptions about the educational needs of students of color. Similar research reveals that business-minded charter leaders prioritize efficiency over community and often neglect to build relationships with local community members prior to establishing or expanding their charter operations, creating tensions between charter personnel and the families of color they serve (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011).

How to network and build alliances across sectors. Finally, and related to charters' affiliations with external partners and advocacy organizations discussed above, many charters hold expertise in networking and building alliances across the nonprofit, for-profit, and public sectors in order to enhance resource, organizational, and political capacity (Ascher et al., 2001; Wohlstetter et al., 2004). To network and build alliances, many charters rely not only on managerial experts, as discussed above, but also on what Wells et al. (1999) describe as "charismatic leaders," individuals who "tend to wield a great deal of political power and symbolic capital that helps them get what they need for their schools" (p. 190). Examples of such charismatic leaders include some CMO founders and executives, such as Success Academy CEO Eva Moskowitz, who, as discussed in Chapter 1, maintains a highly visible political presence, continually advocating for her schools' interests. Indeed, Moskowitz has drawn upon her extensive political experience and savvy to effectively leverage relationships with affluent donors and politically-powerful advocacy organizations with the aim of advancing Success Academy's expansion (Chapman, 2015; Taylor, 2015b). Yet, as Wells et al. point out, the continued stability of some charters is uncertain when their charismatic leaders are gone.

The framework discussed above employs the empirical literature to explain what charter schools oriented around market tenets do, have, and know in order to advance their competitive edge and potential to survive in a market context. In the following section, I discuss how this framework served as a lens through which I investigated how charters founded upon progressive, rather than market, values likewise endeavored to ensure organizational survival.

Part II: Mission Maintenance or Mission Drift? Examining the Survival of Progressive Charters in a Market Context

To explain how charter schools oriented around progressive tenets survive, I investigated what these schools do, have, and know, with attention to whether they exhibited similar or different practices than those captured in the above framework. I approached my study with the hypothesis that alignment with what market-oriented charters do, have, and know would suggest "mission drift" among progressive charter schools. Scholars have identified the tendency for mission-driven social organizations to exhibit mission drift when attending to their survival in a competitive marketplace (Ebrahim et al., 2014; Weisbrod, 2004). Mission drift refers to how such organizations may lose sight of their founding missions in the effort to attain resources and profits in a market environment. This research argues that social enterprise nonprofits must balance two goals: the realization of their social service missions and the pursuit of financial support in a competitive market environment where resources are scarce. Amid competitive market pressures, social enterprises often find themselves "navigating potentially contradictory objectives": delivering a social service and pursuing profits (Ebrahim et al., 2014; p. 84). Notably, mission drift often occurs partly as a result of state disinvestment in social services. For example, Weisbrod argues that diminished public funding for social service nonprofits, such as the YMCA, compelled such organizations to seek out ways to access private funding. To do so,

the YMCA began to locate in affluent neighborhoods and offer services, such as gym memberships, to attract wealthy clientele, hence drifting from its original goal to serve poor communities.

Scholars of organizational behavior similarly argue that organizations respond to the demands of their environment, sometimes subverting their founding aims in the process (e.g., Selznick, 1949). The external environment often compels organizations to depend on material resources to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). To attract material resources and thus enhance their survival prospects, institutional theorists argue that organizations conform to institutionalized norms and practices, or "rules of the game," which dominant organizations tacitly reinforce as institutionally legitimate (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Importantly, institutional theorists point out that organizations often build legitimacy and resources through practices that may deviate from their founding mission or theory of action (e.g., Zald, 1970). For example, employing an institutional lens, Huerta and Zuckerman (2009) argue that, although charter schools in theory are free to experiment with novel approaches, the institutionalized norms that determine legitimate schooling often hinder charters from pursuing innovation. Lubienski (2008) similarly notes that charters' innovations "may be more about appearance than essence," given institutionally-determined rules governing legitimate teaching practices (p. 9).

Although not employing an institutional framework, (Semel, 1999b) demonstrates how the pursuit of resources and legitimacy drove New York City's Dalton School away from its progressive educational vision over time. At its founding in 1919, Dalton served a mix of working class and affluent students, providing scholarships for low-income children, including those from German Jewish families who were denied admission elsewhere. Reflecting Dewey's (1900/1990) call for schools to serve as miniature democratic societies, Dalton's founder, Helen Parkhurst, strove to foster a cooperative learning community where teachers supported students in their self-directed learning endeavors. Over time, however, Dalton departed from progressive pedagogy, incorporated teacher-directed instruction, and increasingly served students from elite families. Semel illustrates how such shifts were largely in response to a conservative political context that eschewed progressive education, more affluent New Yorkers who sought schools that would prepare their children for elite colleges, and a desire to appear institutionally legitimate to such families. Tyack and Tobin (1994) similarly argue that culturally- and politically-reinforced notions of what constitutes legitimate teaching and learning hindered the realization of progressive pedagogy at Dalton and other similar schools. The example of Dalton illustrates how progressive schools may experience mission drift in striving to garner the resources and legitimacy needed for survival.

This study utilized the above framework to uncover whether, and to what extent, independent, progressive charters may similarly respond to the broader market environment, resembling what market-oriented charters do, have, and know, hence experiencing mission drift in their efforts to survive. Conversely, should this study's focal charters exhibit practices, resources, and knowledge not captured by the framework, this would suggest that they are resisting market pressures in the effort to maintain fidelity to their founding missions, yet perhaps at risk to their survival. Furthermore, as discussed above, what market-oriented charters do, have, and know often exacerbate inequitable education, particularly along race and class. In my study of progressive independent charters, this framework allowed me to attend to how, if at all, these schools' practices, resources, and knowledge advanced inequities or remedied them.

My use of this framework to examine independent charter schools extends the existing empirical literature. While not explicitly employing the concept of mission drift, some scholars have demonstrated how independent charter schools adapt their internal practices, particularly curricular and instructional approaches, over time in order to attract resources and students amid competitive market pressures (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Huerta & Zuckerman, 2009; White, 2018). However, this research focuses on what charters *do*, with some additional attention to how what they do impacts what they *have*. This work does not explicitly investigate the interconnections among what progressive charters do, have, and know. Hence, guided by the framework discussed above, my study extends the empirical scholarship by taking a broader view of how independent, progressive charters incorporate their practices, resources, and knowledge to survive in a political environment that disproportionately supports a market-oriented approach. Moreover, in extending Scott and Villavicencio's (2009) framework to explain charter school survival, this study contributes to theory-building regarding the possibilities and limitations to achieving the charter movement's progressive goals in a neoliberal context.

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

To investigate how three independent, progressive charter schools in New York City mobilized political, financial, and ideological support in a market-based context, I employed qualitative, comparative case study methodology. A qualitative approach allowed me to obtain a rich and "complex, detailed understanding" of each schools' mobilization approaches through speaking directly with stakeholders to gain their perspectives and observing them in various school, community, and advocacy contexts (Creswell, 2013, p. 40). This methodological approach allowed me to investigate, in depth, distinct "cases," or independent, progressive charter schools, within their "real life" contexts" (Yin, 2009, p. 111). In addition, a comparative analysis was ideal for illuminating patterns across schools. Research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do independent charter schools build support for and maintain their founding progressive missions in a policy context that favors a market-oriented charter school model?
    a. How do independent charter schools mobilize *political* support for their founding progressive missions and continued operation?
    b. How do independent schools mobilize *financial* support for their founding progressive missions and continued operation?
2. What actors and organizations constitute the supportive political and financial coalitions of independent charter schools?
3. How do charter schools' political and financial resource mobilization activities shape their framing of what constitutes equitable, inclusive, and democratic education?

Qualitative research is intepretivist in nature, "with the research goal of interpreting the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in that world" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). Such research involves "interacting with people in their social contexts and talking with them about their perceptions" (p. 8). Creswell similarly (2013) argues that a qualitative approach is ideal when the aim is to uncover complexity, nuance, and detail. He continues:

> This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature… we conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. (p. 40)

Hence, a qualitative approach is well-suited to studying complex and highly contested phenomena such as charter schools, which stakeholders differently experience, understand, and value (Wells et al., 1999). Moreover, examining independent, progressive charter schools through qualitative methods was an ideal approach to understanding complexity and nuance, allowing me to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of each school's progressive mission, how the mission was leveraged to attract potential supporters, and how each school's approaches to

mobilizing support shaped their framing of equitable, inclusive, and democratic schooling (Creswell & Noth, 2018).

The focal charter schools were purposively selected (Eisenhardt, 1989) based on the literature on independent, mission-oriented charter schools, which differentiates schools by founder type (Henig et al., 2005; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). As I describe in more detail below, I drew upon multiple sources of data, an advantage of the case study approach (Yin, 2009). To understand how schools mobilized support, I conducted interviews with school leaders and board trustees, and individuals whom they identified as key advocates or supporters. I also conducted observations of classroom instruction, board trustee meetings, and schoolwide community events; and collected documents, such as schools' marketing and communication materials, family newsletters, and social media activity. In addition, to understand the broader political context in which these focal schools were situated, I collected information on the state of charter school policy and politics and, more broadly, public education policy and equity in New York City. To do so, I followed local media coverage on education and charter schools in such sources as *The New York Times*, *Politico New York*, and *Chalkbeat New York*. I also gathered research reports, produced by various New York City-based government and research organizations, on public education, equity, and segregation.

In this chapter, Part I presents detailed profiles of each of the three focal charter schools. In Part II, I explain my data collection procedures and describe how my role and positionality as a researcher impacted my access to data. Part III discusses my data analysis procedures. Finally, Part IV describes the limitations and strengths of this study's research design.

Part I: The Focal Charter Schools

This study's focal charter schools were theoretically sampled (Eisenhardt, 1989) based on the literature, which distinguishes among independent, mission-oriented charter schools by founder type: educators, parents, and non-profit organizations (Henig et al., 2005). Further, in New York City, some charter schools were founded as traditional public schools and later converted to charter status (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). In order to understand how the focal schools solicited the support needed to emerge *and* remain in operation, I included two that were in their first 5-year charter terms at the time of data collection and one that had been in operation for over 20 years. Each of this study's focal schools were located outside the three charter-dense neighborhoods described in Chapter 1.

As per state law, admission to each of the focal charter schools is by lottery, and gives lottery preferences to students residing within the Community School District (CSD). However, as I describe below, each school provides additional lottery preferences to certain applicants, for instance, siblings of current students, children of staff members, and children who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

In what follows, I provide profiles of each school, describing the CSDs and neighborhoods in which they are located, demographics of currently-enrolled students, the founding mission, and other distinguishing characteristics. To protect the confidentiality of each school, I refer to each school by a pseudonym, discuss the CSDs and neighborhoods in which they are situated in broad terms, and use approximations rather than exact percentages when describing demographic and achievement data. To prepare these profiles, I drew upon interview and observation data from this study, demographic data from the New York City Department of

Education (DOE), New York State Education Department (NYSED), and the nonprofit organization Inside Schools; and the 2016–2017 annual report each school prepared for NYSED.

Empire Charter School

Founding story and location. In 2014, three individuals who had met as teachers at a progressive elementary charter school founded Empire Charter School in the same neighborhood where they previously worked**.** The three co-founders served as Empire's co-leaders at the time of data collection, though one co-leader was on extended medical leave for much of the school year and left this position in June 2018. In its first year, Empire served one kindergarten and one first grade class and added another grade each subsequent year. At the time of data collection, Empire enrolled students in grades K through 4. The co-leaders and board decided that Empire would not add pre-K or middle school grades in fall 2018, despite much parent demand.

Prior to writing their charter application for Empire, the three co-leaders traveled across the United States for over a year, visiting over 40 traditional public and charter schools. Insights gained from their travels informed the design of Empire, which one co-leader described as the "school of [their] dreams": a school serving a racially and socioeconomically diverse student population and centered on progressive pedagogy. This co-leader explained that she and her colleagues were primarily interested in opening a traditional public elementary school, but were told by the DOE that "probably budget-wise, [we'd] only be able to get two leaders." In contrast, the charter school model would allow them to institute a three-leader structure, so they applied for a charter from one of the state authorizers.

Empire is located on a wide, quiet, tree-lined block, across from brick row houses and a Mediterranean restaurant and wine bar. The school is in a public building, which is shared with two traditional public schools. The three co-founders had initially aimed to open Empire in an adjacent neighborhood, but their state authorizer approved their charter application for the neighborhood in which Empire is currently located. Given the co-founders' goal of enrolling a racially and socioeconomically diverse population, the school's current CSD appeared to be a suitable location: in 2017, nearly half of CSD students were Black or African American, around 20% were Asian, 15% were White, and 15% were Hispanic or Latino.[3] Notably, however, this CSD comprises numerous highly stratified neighborhoods, and in 2016, the neighborhood in which Empire is situated was far less diverse racially than the broader CSD: nearly half of all residents were White, while one-quarter were Black or African American, about 10% were Asian, and 10% were Hispanic or Latino. The neighborhood had experienced rapid gentrification since 2000, when the share of Black or African American residents was 40% and the share of White residents was 30%. In addition, between 2000 and 2016, median income in this neighborhood rose from $60,000 to nearly $90,000 (New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, 2018). As I discuss below, each year, Empire's student demographics have more closely aligned with those of its surrounding neighborhood than the broader CSD, illuminating that the co-leaders have not achieved their racial or socioeconomic diversity goals.

Mission and key design features. Empire is chartered as a K–5 elementary school. Its mission is to "honor the individuality of each learner" through an inquiry-based, interdisciplinary instructional approach. The curriculum centers on sustainability, understood in terms of

[3] Here, and throughout this chapter, I use the demographic categories employed by the DOE and NYSED.

environmental stewardship as well as social and economic justice. Also integrated into the curriculum are visual art, music, and movement, which students experience in both arts-focused classes taught by specialists and in their general education classrooms. The school maintains partnerships with multiple arts-based community and cultural organizations. Each general education class is co-taught by two teachers, of whom one is certified in special education, and teachers stay with the same class for 2 years, a practice known as "looping." Teachers and staff incorporate a "Responsive Classroom" approach to behavior management, which focuses on developing students' socioemotional competencies, considered among the co-leaders to be equally important to academic development. Students are on a first-name basis with their teachers and other school staff, and school uniforms consist of a T-shirt bearing the school logo, which is available in a range of bright colors, and the child's choice of bottoms and sneakers. Teacher attrition is quite low; in 2016–2017, only one teacher chose not to return for the following school year.

Learning experiences are structured around play and exploration, and students do not receive homework until third grade. In addition, once per week, Empire students, staff, and families gather in the gymnasium for around 20 minutes of community-building. During this time, teachers lead students in shared singing; classes perform a song or dance; and the school community celebrates birthdays. Songs are often social-justice oriented, and include protest songs and African American spirituals. During the fall and spring months, a student representative, with the help of a teacher, announces what is for sale at the school's community farm stand.

Student demographics. In the 2017–2018 school year, the school served over 250 students in grades K–4. Despite their intention to enroll an integrated student population, Empire receives disproportionate demand from affluent and White families residing in the immediate school neighborhood, rather than a more diverse mix of families from across the CSD. As is required by state charter law, admission to the school is by lottery, but, with permission from its state authorizer, Empire provides a lottery preference for "economically-disadvantaged" students, or those who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL). Yet although the school leaders set aside 40% of seats for FRPL-eligible students, in 2017–2018, only about a quarter of Empire students were economically-disadvantaged. To enroll more economically-disadvantaged students, Empire engages in targeted recruitment efforts in the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing developments, as well as in all Head Start programs, within its CSD, and in summer 2017, the co-leaders hired two individuals to help with these efforts. These individuals are the parent of a currently-enrolled Empire student, and the parent coordinator of a neighborhood Head Start program. To further leverage relationships with families in NYCHA, a member of Empire's Board of Trustees is a NYCHA employee who grew up in NYCHA housing; this board trustee shared that he personally knocks on NYCHA doors and talks with its residents do build awareness of and interest in Empire.

These targeted outreach efforts appear to have done little to racially diversify Empire's student population. In 2017–2018, almost half of its students were White, while just over one-quarter were Black or African American, and around one-fifth each were students classified as Hispanic, Asian, and "Other." By contrast, as discussed above, across the CSD, almost half of all students were Black or African American, and around 15% were White. One school leader explained that, although the CSD is racially and socioeconomically mixed, the neighborhood in which Empire is situated is "beyond gentrified" and their targeted outreach to the CSD's poor communities and communities of color have yielded little change to the race and class

demographics of students who apply to the school. To address this issue, in spring 2018, the school leaders successfully lobbied the school's state authorizer for a change to its enrollment policy, which would allow the school to recruit and enroll students not only within its CSD, but rather, across New York City. The school leaders expressed optimism that this new policy, to be instituted in the 2019–2020 year, would enable the school to draw higher numbers of students of color.

Finally, in 2017–2018 Empire enrolled a higher share of students with special learning needs, or had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), relative to charter elementary schools across the CSD and city. About 20% of Empire students had an IEP, compared with just over 10% each across the CSD and city (Domanico, 2015). However, whereas, on average, 7% of students in charter elementary schools in New York City were classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), at Empire, this figure was much less, at around 1%. According to Empire's co-leaders, the limited numbers of ELLs in Empire's CSD—less than 5%—created challenges in enrolling higher shares of ELLs. However, they noted that they continued to engage in targeted outreach and recruitment in the effort to enroll more ELLs.

Student achievement. At the time of data collection for this study, Empire had only one year of student testing data, from spring 2017, when Empire's first third grade classes took the state math and English Language Arts (ELA) exam for the first time. The test results were disappointing to the school leaders and parents, as around one-fifth of students scored proficient or above on ELA, and around one-third students scored proficient or above in math. By contrast, across the CSD, nearly half of all third grade students scored proficient or above on ELA, and the same figure held for math. The school leaders made multiple efforts to address parent concerns and better prepare students for the spring 2018 exams. For instance, during the school's annual open house for parents, held in September 2017, the school leaders held a separate meeting for parents of third and fourth grade students to discuss the test results and hear parent concerns. The school leaders also made several instructional changes, including adding six weeks of test preparation for third and fourth grade students and hiring a part-time literacy and math coach. I discuss these instructional changes in more detail in Chapter 7.

The test results were also concerning to Empire's Board of Trustees, as they perceived student outcomes to be of great importance to the school's charter renewal. One board trustee noted that the school's state authorizer made it very clear to the board and school leaders that Empire's charter renewal would significantly hinge upon improved student achievement. The importance of test scores to successful charter renewal appeared to be overstated, as only nine charter schools have had their charters revoked or not renewed between 1999 and 2015 (New York City Charter School Center, n. d.) Nevertheless, during board meetings, the school leaders regularly updated board trustees on their efforts to boost student test scores, presenting quantitative data in the form of charts and spreadsheets, as well as anecdotal evidence of their experiences with students and teachers.

Parent and family engagement. Empire's version of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is active in organizing school events that have the dual purposes of building community and fundraising for the school. However, interview and observation data suggest the most engaged parents are those who are wealthy and White, and, according to parent leaders I interviewed, both of whom were White, recruiting diverse parent involvement is an ongoing challenge. A related challenge is the fact that, particularly in the school's early years, White and wealthy parent leaders organized school events that drew little participation from Empire's poor families and families of color. One White parent leader posited that such events were too

expensive, and, relatedly, venues for certain fundraising events, such as upscale restaurants, were unappealing to families of color. According to interviewees, the PTA leadership has attempted to make events more inclusive, but an ongoing challenge is that the most outspoken and opinionated parents continue to be those who are disproportionately White and wealthy. Parent leaders interviewed explained that the PTA continues to engage in honest and difficult dialogues regarding how to be more inclusive and how to fundraise effectively while keeping ticketed events, such as the school's annual gala, affordable and accessible to all.

Hudson Charter School

Founding story and location. In the early 1990s, a group of about a dozen public school educators founded the Hudson School as a traditional public school. These educators, who were about evenly split among Black and White members, were unsatisfied with their professional experiences at traditional public schools, particularly the limited opportunities for professional growth and the constraints of the prescribed curricula. In regular gatherings, which began to take place in 1991, the group discussed their frustrations and visions for what a truly great school could look like; their shared vision came to center on a collaborative, democratic leadership and governance structure. In 1992, the group encountered an advertisement from the nonprofit organization New Visions School Projects, part of New York City's Fund for Public Education; the Fund was soliciting proposals for new models of small, innovative public schools. The group applied, and was awarded, one of the 16 school start-up grants distributed by the Fund. The following year, the group of educators—who were all still working full-time in other schools—met on evenings and weekends to plan the new school. In September 1993, Hudson opened its doors to 130 students in 5 classes. Around half of Hudson's founding group continued to serve as staff members in the school's first year. In the following 6 years, Hudson added subsequent grade levels and, by 1998, served students in grades K–12.

In 1999, just 1 year after New York's Charter School Act was passed, Hudson applied to convert to charter status. The rationale for doing so, as Hudson's current and former school leaders expressed, was to leverage the autonomy of the charter model to maintain its collaborative leadership and governance structures. In addition, school leaders believed that the charter school model would further empower teachers to institute innovative teaching methods. The state charter law mandated that staff and parents approve the conversion to charter status. Parents overwhelmingly voted in favor of doing so, whereas staff were more mixed, with only about two-thirds of staff voting in favor of charter conversion. Following these votes, Hudson submitted its charter application and was approved. In September 2000, Hudson opened as a charter school, and its charter was subsequently renewed in 2005, 2010, and 2015. Notably, Hudson maintained its unionized status upon conversion, which I discuss more extensively in Chapter 5. In keeping with the school's longstanding aim to empower teachers as leaders and provide opportunities for professional growth, many of Hudson's original teaching and leadership staff continued to work at the school over subsequent decades. In fact, at the time of data collection, numerous members of the leadership and management team, including the school's principal, were initially parent volunteers at the school. At least one staff member was a former student.

In 2014, Hudson welcomed its first class of pre-K students, and since then, has served students in grades pre-K–12. Hudson is unique in being a pre-K–12 charter school; as of 2017–2018, only 36 out of New York City's 227 charter schools served K–12 students (New York City Charter School Center, 2017). In the 2017–2018 school year, the school served over 550 students

in grades pre-K–12, intentionally enrolling only one class per grade in the elementary grades, and two classes per grade in the middle and high school grades, in order to cultivate a close-knit, village-like atmosphere that prioritized relationships among students and staff. In 2016, Hudson's school leaders submitted, and were granted, an application for a second charter school. Leaders had hoped to open the second school by fall 2019, but have been unable to secure a facility, pushing the anticipated opening date to fall 2020.

Hudson is housed in a privately-owned facility off a busy commercial street, and it shares its tree-lined block with a public library branch and residential co-op apartment complexes. Hudson is located in one of the most racially, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse neighborhoods of New York City, home to a sizeable immigrant population from countries in East and South Asia and Central and South America. In 2017, the neighborhood was about two-thirds Hispanic or Latino, nearly 20% Asian, 10% White, and 5% Black or African American. These demographics were about the same as those of students across the broader CSD. In 2017, median income in the neighborhood was about $55,000, though the CSD as a whole was poorer; nearly 70% of CSD students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. Hudson is consistently one of the most highly sought-after schools in its CSD, with a waitlist each year of over 3,000 students each year.

Mission and key design features. Hudson's mission centers on developing students as "global citizens" and leaders who value community and collaboration. As discussed above, the leadership and governance structure of the school since its early years has been oriented around collaborative and distributed leadership. Several "layers" of school leadership are in place to maximize shared decision-making among all constituencies: a board of trustees comprising staff, parents, and community members who oversee the school's adherence to its charter; a school management team comprising the principal and other central administrators; a collective school governance team comprising staff, parents, students, and community members who ensure the realization of the school's mission; a PTA; and a student government. Collaborative leadership is central at the classroom level, as well, as all classes are each co-taught by a team of two teachers.

Hudson's teaching and learning program centers on a progressive model, where a standards-aligned curriculum is integrated with project-based learning and emphases on community service and engagement. The arts are an integral part of the curriculum; indeed, by high school, all students are expected to "major" in either fine arts, music, or theater. Teachers across grades also incorporate Hudson's rooftop garden and greenhouse into interdisciplinary learning experiences. All students participate in a week-long project-based learning period, in which staff lead them in a range of hands-on projects revolving around a theme, such as immigration, geology, animal welfare, and politics and the media. These projects often comprise numerous field trips across New York City and State. Staff members design their own projects and students participate in one of their top choices.

Students are on a first-name basis with teachers and staff and do not wear uniforms. To foster a community atmosphere, on two of the school's four floors, classrooms line the perimeter, and the central floor space contains tables and chairs for students to engage in small study or social groups or town hall meetings. The school's privately-operated cafeteria often serves food from students' home cultures, including Halal food.

Student demographics. As reported in its 2016–2017 annual report, Hudson students speak a total of over 20 home languages, and staff speak nearly a dozen languages. A visual rendering of the languages spoken among the school community is displayed prominently in Hudson's foyer. Over 60% of Hudson students are classified as Hispanic or Latino, and the next

largest racial group is Asian, at nearly 20%. Just over 10% of students are White, and a little less than 10% are Black or African American. These figures are about even with those of the CSD, discussed above, though Hudson enrolls a smaller share of White students, and a larger share of Black students, relative to the shares of White and Black students in the CSD.

Three-quarters of Hudson students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and about 15% are students with disabilities. These figures are about the same as the shares of economically-disadvantaged students and students with disabilities across the CSD. However, less than 10% of Hudson's students are classified as English language learners, compared with over 15% in the CSD.

Student achievement. In 2017, Hudson students performed lower on the state's ELA test relative to students across the CSD. Over 30% of Hudson's elementary students (in grades 3–5) scored proficient or above in ELA, compared to over 40% across the CSD. Nearly half of Hudson's middle school students scored proficient or above in ELA, compared to half in the CSD. In math, nearly 40% of Hudson's elementary students scored proficient or above, compared to almost half in the CSD. However, Hudson middle school students outperformed students in the CSD: over half of Hudson's middle school students scored proficient or above in math, while just over 40% did so across the CSD.

Hudson has continuously boasted a strong graduation and college matriculation rate. In 2017–2018, all of Hudson's twelfth grade students were accepted to college, all but one to 4-year programs. The majority of these students planned to attend colleges within the public City University of New York or State University of New York systems, and around five students planned to attend private institutions.

Parent and family engagement. Since its early years, parent and family engagement was a fundamental aspect of Hudson's model, and a full-time parent coordinator has been on staff to facilitate this work. Over the years, some parent volunteers were hired as full-time staff members. In fact, as noted above, at the time of data collection, several members of the school's leadership team, including the principal, were initially involved in Hudson as parent volunteers. As discussed above, parents have numerous opportunities to be involved in the school: not only as classroom volunteers, but also as members of the collective governance team and board of trustees. The school also maintains an active PTA, and in 2017–2018, a co-president of Hudson's PTA was an alumnus of the school. To foster inclusivity, particularly among the school's sizeable Latinx family population, a Spanish-speaking member of the school staff is often present at school events, such as school information sessions, the public admissions lottery, and some board meetings, to provide Spanish language translation.

As described in the school's 2016–2017 annual report, Hudson has long enjoyed close ties with the community, and many Hudson staff and families are involved in various community boards and civic organizations. In addition, Hudson regularly opens its doors to host community events within its building. These community ties not only nurture Hudson's relationship with its neighbors, but also maintains Hudson's ongoing base of community support, which have been critical to its charter renewals since 2000. I discuss Hudson's community engagement efforts in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Liberty Charter School

Founding story and location. Liberty Charter School is a middle school serving students in grades 6–8, and was founded in 2015 by a group of primarily White parents and community members who lived in a disproportionately White and wealthy neighborhood, though this

neighborhood is part of a more racially and socioeconomically mixed CSD. These community members were dissatisfied with the fact that virtually all the public middle schools in their CSD were academically selective, or "screened" schools. Liberty's founders sought to open an "unscreened" middle school where students would be admitted regardless of prior academic achievement. They believed that an unscreened middle school was necessary to expand educational equity and access in the community. Upon conducting a survey of community needs and preferences, the school founders learned that there was a particular shortage of middle school seats in the neighborhood's CSD due to increased numbers of families with young children but no school expansion plans to keep up with the growth of the CSD's child population. According to Liberty's Executive Director, Liberty's founders initially sought to open a traditional public middle school, rather than a charter school, but applied for a charter, as the process of doing so was much easier than that for a traditional public school.

At the time of data collection, Liberty's Executive Director and Principal were among the founding staff members. In addition, multiple members of the Board of Trustees had been involved in Liberty in various capacities since the school first opened, including as a staff member, parent, and founding board member. Liberty submitted its application for charter renewal in fall 2017, and in late spring 2018, the school's authorizer renewed Liberty's charter for another 4 years, 1 year short of the full 5-year renewal term.

Liberty rents a private facility, which it shares with two other public schools, including a public pre-K program. The school building is located near a highway and auto body shops, though in recent years, upscale restaurants and bars have opened nearby, as well. Similar to Empire, Liberty is located in a CSD comprising highly stratified neighborhoods in terms of race and class. To illustrate, in 2017, the CSD's student population was nearly 40% Hispanic or Latino, nearly 30% White, 15% Black or African American, and 15% Asian. However, in 2017, the neighborhood in which Liberty is located was about two-thirds White, 15% Hispanic, 10% Black or African American, and 5% Asian. While the median income across Liberty's neighborhood was over $100,000 in 2017, over half of students in the CSD qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. Researchers have found that racially and socioeconomically segregated housing patterns is one factor underlying deep levels of public school segregation across this CSD (Mader et al., 2018). In recent years, parents and other community leaders have become increasingly active in organizing to promote more integrated public schools across this CSD. While largely outside the scope of such organizing work, which focuses on the traditional public schools in the CSD, the founders of Liberty have been interested in integration since opening the school. Liberty's Executive Director has attended some informational meetings organized by integration advocates, but, to date, has not been an active participant in this work.

Mission and key design features. Liberty's mission is to provide an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, hands-on approach to middle school education. In founding Liberty, community members sought to expand adolescents' engagement with and exposure to nature, which is limited in New York City. Thus, Liberty's curriculum is oriented around the theme of green living and sustainability, which is broadly understood as not only caring for the environment, but also sustaining healthy communities through economic, social, and racial justice. This multi-faceted conceptualization of sustainability is incorporated into all areas of the curriculum. For instance, students maintain a small garden in front of the school building, study the impact of gentrification on neighborhoods, and analyze how families participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can eat healthfully within a limited budget. In addition, a key component of Liberty's focus on developing students' sustainable lifestyles is meditation,

which the students practice daily. Most classes are co-taught, and, as at Empire, one co-teacher is certified in special education. As described in its annual report to NYSED, Liberty educators endeavor to nurture students' socioemotional development through research-based interventions, positive behavior supports, advisory periods, and alternative assessment practices. During my classroom observations, teachers displayed a combination of direct instruction and student-led activities. Furthermore, classrooms were lively with students engaging in small-group conversation, and the school principal explained to me that teachers encourage conversation, instilling in students the skill of keeping their voices to a reasonable level. Students are on a first-name basis with their teachers and wear a school uniform daily, consisting of black pants and a polo shirt bearing the school logo.

Student demographics. In the 2017–2018 school, the school served nearly 300 students, of whom about 40% were Black or African American, 30% were Hispanic or Latino, 20% were White, and about 5% each were Asian and "Other." Similar demographic patterns held across each of the grade levels. Although somewhat racially mixed, this distribution did not mirror the demographics of students in the CSD, discussed above, where the largest racial groups are Hispanic or Latino and White. In Chapter 6, I discuss in detail Liberty's enrollment challenges and how it recruited students from neighboring CSDs in order to meet its enrollment targets.

However, in 2017–2018, Liberty's share of economically disadvantaged students—nearly 60%—more closely aligned with that of the CSD as a whole. Liberty also served a slightly higher percentage of students with disabilities, but a much lower percentage of English language learners, relative to the shares of these student populations across the CSD. Compared to all charter middle schools, Liberty served a slightly higher percentage of students with disabilities, and about the same percentage of English language learners (Domanico, 2015).

According to Liberty's 2016–2017 report to NYSED, to increase its enrollment of economically-disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners, Liberty has on staff an outreach coordinator, who is also a Spanish speaker. This individual works to build relationships with local community-based organizations, including those serving Latinx and Chinese populations. In addition, school brochures and applications are distributed throughout the community, including the NYCHA housing complexes, community gardens, community centers, libraries, pools, and places of worship; and are translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Russian. Spanish-language advertisements for the school are included in Spanish radio stations and newspapers.

Student achievement. In 2017, approximately 25% of Liberty students scored proficient or above on the state math exam, and around 40% scored proficient or above on the ELA exam. By contrast, across middle school students in the CSD, nearly 50% scored proficient or above in math, and just over 50% scored proficient or above in ELA. Liberty's lower test scores relative to middle school scores across the CSD were quite concerning to the Executive Director, principal, and board members, who perceived Liberty's test score data as critical to its charter renewal prospects. Yet Liberty's lower student achievement scores relative to those of across the CSD were not surprising to the Executive Director, principal, and board members, who understood that the majority of middle schools in the CSD are academically selective and disproportionately enroll high-performing students.

Across each of Liberty's eighth grade classes to date, between seven and 10 percent of students have gone on to some of the most selective public high schools in New York City. In addition, nearly 80% of eighth grade students each year receive high school credit, and all

Liberty students take two Regents exams, which are required for high school graduation in New York City.

Parent and family engagement. Liberty maintains an active PTA, which organizes schoolwide events, including family information nights regarding high school admissions, parenting teenagers, and other topics. The PTA also distributes a bi-monthly newsletter, which is available in English and Spanish. In addition, at the time of data collection, two members of the board of trustees were parents of former or currently enrolled students, and the PTA president was a non-voting member of the board. In spring 2018, the board chair was in the process of installing the PTA president as a voting member.

Part II: Data Collection

Case studies rely on multiple sources of data (Yin, 2009), and for this project, data sources included interviews, observations, and documents, collected over the 10-month 2017–2018 academic year (August 2017–June 2018). In this section, I describe my pilot research and challenges to access, how I recruited schools and participants, this study's sources of data, and my positionality as a researcher.

Pilot Research and Challenges to Access

My initial research plan was to conduct a comparative study of the political and financial advocacy activities of all charters in one particular CSD. I believed this CSD was unique and warranted investigation because it was not located in one of the three most charter-dense New York City neighborhoods, yet had over a dozen charter schools of various types—independent and CMO-affiliated—and at different stages of operation—from fewer than 5 years to over a decade. Moreover, this CSD was racially and socioeconomically heterogeneous, and its charters included independent, progressive schools enrolling high percentages of economically-advantaged White and Asian students, as well as CMOs that disproportionately served high-poverty Black and Latinx students.

In the spring of 2017, I conducted pilot interviews with school leaders at three charter schools in this CSD—two independent charters and one CMO. I contacted these school leaders via email, having found their email addresses on their school's websites. In my emails, I explained the aims and scope of my project. When they consented to be interviewed, I conducted the interviews in May 2017. I supplemented these pilot interviews with preliminary research on the CSD's institutional and political landscape of charter schools by following stories in the news media and reading scholarly accounts of the neighborhood's history.

After these pilot interviews, I proceeded to contact the school leaders of all charter schools in the CSD. One school leader who participated in a pilot interview agreed to my studying her school over the course of the 2017–2018 school year; this was one of the co-leaders of Empire Charter School. Another school leader declined to participate, but put me in touch with the school leader of Hudson Charter School, who, upon meeting me and learning about this project, agreed to participate. And another school leader consented to an interview, and welcomed me to the school's public board trustee meetings (of which I attended five during the course of data collection for this study), but did not agree to my interviewing other school personnel or supporters. The remaining school leaders whom I contacted either declined to participate or did not respond.

These challenges in gaining access were similar to those of other qualitative researchers who study charter schools, especially those who study CMOs (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018). Indeed, DiMartino and Jessen (2018) write that "the lack of transparency and access to some [charter] organizations [was] a limitation" to their study of charter school marketing practices (p. 28). Limited access compelled me to redesign my study. When the school leaders of Empire and Hudson agreed to participate in this project, I decided to shift the focus of my inquiry to conduct an in-depth comparison of a smaller number of independent, community-based, mission-oriented charter schools. Hence, informed by the extant research classifying mission-oriented charter schools by founder type (Henig et al., 2005; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010), I strove compile a sample of independent charters for this study that aligned with this typology. Because Empire represented a teacher-created charter school, and Hudson represented a conversion charter school, I conducted a targeted school recruitment effort with the goal of securing two additional independent charter schools: one founded by community members and one founded in partnership with a nonprofit community-based organization (CBO). I drew upon my own personal and professional networks to gain access to these two types of schools. Through this method, I met the Executive Director of Liberty Charter School, who agreed to Liberty's participation in this study. However, I was ultimately not able to gain full access to an independent charter school founded in conjunction with a CBO. The leader of one CBO-affiliated school consented to an informational interview and welcomed me to the public meetings of the board of trustees, but did not grant me access to other interview participants within the organization. Hence, the focal schools for this study were Empire, Hudson, and Liberty Charter Schools.

Participant Recruitment

Once I had secured access to this study's three focal schools, I conducted interviews with each school's leader and asked them for the email addresses of the board trustees. I then sent emails to each school's board trustees, describing the aims and scope of my study and inviting them to be interviewed. Through the initial batch of interviews with school leaders and board trustees, I identified some of each school's key advocates, including other school staff members, advocacy organization staff, authorizing office staff, elected officials, consultants, and parent leaders. As I identified each of these individuals, I contacted them via email, describing my study and inviting them to be interviewed. I also invited local elected officials and policymakers working in the realm of charter school policy to be interviewed. If I did not hear from an individual after sending three emails, I ceased contact. Below, I discuss the interview procedure in greater detail.

Data Sources

Interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2001) with charter school leaders, board members, and their supporters (i.e., advocates, community organization staff, education reformers, elected officials). Further, to understand how charter school advocacy politics are situated within the broader landscape of charter school policy and advocacy in New York City and State, I interviewed policymakers and staff members in the DOE and NYSED. In total, I interviewed 44 individuals; I interviewed 11 of these individuals twice, once in fall 2017, and again in spring 2018. Those whom I interviewed twice included five school leaders and administrators (at least one per school), three board trustees (one per school), and three advocates. Interviewing these individuals twice allowed me to capture these participants'

perspectives, insights, and reflections at the beginning and end of the academic year. Interviews were held in the location of each participant's choosing, typically the individual's office or a café. Interviews ranged from 30 to 100 minutes, and in total, I collected approximately 50 hours of interview data. If participants consented, I audio-recorded our interview, which was subsequently transcribed by a professional transcription service. I include this study's interview protocols in the Appendix.

Observations. I supplemented interviews with observations of charter school board trustee meetings to learn about how charter school leaders discuss plans for civic mobilization, fundraising, or political advocacy. As per New York State's Open Meetings Law, these board meetings were legally required to be publicly advertised and open to public attendance (Committee on Open Government, New York Department of State, n.d.). I observed five board meetings at each school. Empire and Liberty's charter school authorizer required a total of 10 board meetings each academic year, and I attended half of the total meetings at each school. I was not able to attend more than 5 meetings each at Empire and Liberty, as these schools held their board meetings at the same time each month. Hudson's authorizer required a total of five board meetings. I attended four of Hudson's five meetings; two of these meetings also included a meeting of the board of Hudson's second school. I also attended one meeting in which only the board of Hudson's second school were present; and one meeting of Hudson's fundraising board. Each board meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes, though some lasted as long as 2 hours. In total, I observed approximately 25 hours of board trustee meetings.

To gain familiarity and understanding of each school's progressive mission and key design features, I observed classrooms and select school community events, including school assemblies, tours and informational events for prospective families, and admissions lotteries. In total, I observed approximately 16 hours of such events.

Finally, I observed charter school policy and advocacy events, such as CSD town halls, charter school renewal hearings, advocacy and lobbying events, and other public meetings aimed at building support for charter schools. These included a charter school advocacy and lobbying event at the State Capitol in Albany and convenings organized by the Coalition for Community Charter Schools (C3S). In total, I observed approximately seven hours of such events.

Across these three types of events, I conducted around 48 hours of observations. During observations, I followed the procedures for taking ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I made jotted notes with low levels of inference and expanded jottings into full written field notes within 24 hours of each observation.

Documents. Finally, I collected documents as additional evidence of each charter school's political and financial resource mobilization efforts. These documents included the focal charter schools' charter application and renewal documents; internally-produced balance sheets and other financial documents; IRS 990 tax forms for 2016; marketing materials; family newsletters and other communications; websites; and board meeting agendas and minutes.

School	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Empire	10 (3 interviewed more than once)	14.5 hours	70
Hudson	11 (4 interviewed more than once)	12.5 hours	75
Liberty	11 (2 interviewed more than once)	14 hours	63
Other stakeholders and organizations	12 (2 interviewed more than once)	6.5 hours	15

Table 2: Data Sources

Researcher Role and Positionality

As a former teacher in traditional public and charter schools in New York City, I entered this study with personal and professional contacts in New York City's traditional public school and charter school systems. As described above, when faced with challenges to access, I leveraged these connections in the process of recruiting schools and participants for this project. My experience demonstrates that prior personal and professional connections matter greatly for securing access to charter schools for research purposes, as many charter school leaders appear reluctant open their schools to researchers.

I believe that several factors related to my identity as a researcher compelled those who participated in this project to trust me and speak candidly during interviews. First, my past experience as an educator in New York City's traditional public and charter school systems likely contributed to my credibility as a charter school researcher. Before consenting to be interviewed, some individuals asked me questions about why I was interested in studying their schools. I addressed such queries by describing how my past professional experience at traditional public and charter schools in New York City sparked my interest in public education policy, politics, and school choice. My teaching experience and knowledge of New York City's public charter school landscape may have prompted informants to consider me less of an outsider to their world and, in turn, to trust me and exhibit a willingness to speak openly during interviews.

Moreover, my past experience at one of New York City's largest CMOs, well-known for its no-excuses pedagogical approach (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013), coupled with my research interest in independent charters, may have signaled to some informants that I was sympathetic to their charter school's progressive pedagogical approach. Furthermore, some informants may have assumed that my affiliation with the University of California, Berkeley, given the institution's past and current involvement in liberal politics and activism, was an indication that I held progressive political views with regard to charter schooling, views aligned with their schools' progressive founding orientations. Although I worked hard not to express my personal opinions or beliefs regarding charter schools with informants, they may nevertheless have made assumptions regarding my political and ideological stance based on my past experiences, current research interests, and Berkeley affiliation. Their assumptions may have led them to trust me and speak candidly during interviews.

Some interview participants also asked me why I was interested in studying independent, community-based charter schools. To such queries, I explained that it was my sense that independent charter schools remain less understood relative to large charter networks. Some interview participants appeared to share this perspective, as evidenced by comments about the disproportionate numbers of CMO-affiliated charter schools in New York City. For example, the principal of Hudson Charter School noted that "the PR around charters" has unfairly overlooked independent schools: "We all get lumped together, which is a problem." Thus, informants may have been especially trusting and willing to talk with me given my interest in understanding an aspect of the charter sector that, in their view, has received limited attention.

I believe that my efforts to respect the confidentiality of all informants further compelled them to trust me. At the outset of each interview, I explained that it was their choice whether or not I would record the interview, and I did not take out the recorder until they had indicated their consent by signing the form required by UC Berkeley's Institutional Review Board. I also explained that they were free to decline answering any questions, and to ask that I turn the recorder off at any time. Only three individuals did not consent to be recorded, out of the 44

individuals I interviewed. In addition, an advantage of my year-long study was that many informants became familiar with me over time when we saw one another at monthly board trustee meetings and other public events. Their familiarity with me likely helped me to gain their trust. This trust was evident in the willingness of all informants whom I had contacted for a follow-up interview to meet for a second, sometimes third, time.

My racial identity as a Filipina-American may have also shaped informants' willingness to speak with me. I have a Spanish surname, but my phenotype and other physical features often cause others to mistake me for Chinese—a common experience among Filipino Americans, who, according to Ocampo (2016), occupy an ambiguous racial identity between Latinx and Asian. Scholarly and media discourses regarding charter schools and race in New York City tend to focus on the sector's impact on Black and Latinx students (e.g., Kucsera & Orfield, 2014; Mader et al., 2018; White, 2018), who constitute the majority of students in charter schools and the district as a whole (New York City Charter School Center, 2017). Hence, in appearing not to belong to either of these racial groups, interview participants—the majority of whom were White—may have viewed me as somewhat of a racially "neutral" interlocutor, impacting their willingness to speak candidly with me.

Finally, as Ewing (2018) points out, it is important to attend to positionality in terms of the body. Similar to Ewing, over the course of my research, I became aware that my physical stature as a petite woman may have enabled me to go unnoticed, thus allowing me to obtain rich data. For example, during board trustee meetings, trustees often conducted candid discussions in my presence, including regarding some sensitive matters about school personnel, rather than reserving such topics for confidential executive sessions. Conversely, combined with my racial appearance, my relatively small frame may have caused interviewees to view me as unthreatening, such that they felt comfortable discussing such matters in my presence. In addition, during school, community, or advocacy events, my physical stature enabled me to blend in with the crowd and not attract much attention as an outsider, enabling me to observe and take notes unnoticed. As another example of how I went unnoticed during board trustee meetings, one Liberty board trustee mentioned about halfway through our interview in January 2018 that she did not realize I had been attending board meetings for several months. On the other hand, however, blending in may have hindered my ability to gain individuals' attention for an interview. Indeed, even after having introduced myself in person at a board meeting or other school event, a few individuals either did not respond to my emails requesting an interview, or did so only after repeated follow-up emails. While their slow responses, or lack of responses altogether, may be evidence of their busy schedules, they may also signal how my small-framed body did not make a substantial impression in their memories. In short, my physical build likely both facilitated my access to data at times, and constrained my access on other occasions.

Part III: Data Analysis

As is common in qualitative case study research, data collection and analysis proceeded in a concurrent and iterative fashion (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Yin, 2009). I analyzed data through three main methods: qualitative coding, memo-writing, and representing and visualizing data. I describe each below.

Coding. Data were qualitatively coded using the NVivo qualitative software package, employing both inductive and deductive codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I developed an initial list of codes deductively, based on key concepts from this study's conceptual

framework, discussed in Chapter 3. These codes pertained to what charters do, have, and know, and included the following: "selective enrollment," "strategic marketing," "replication and expansion," "affiliation with management organization," "access to high status donors," "relationships with alternative teacher and leader preparation programs," "support from political advocacy coalitions," "outcomes-oriented pedagogy," "managerial expertise," and "ability to build alliances." To supplement the list of deductive codes, I generated inductive codes, which were empirically grounded in the data. These codes emerged as I read through interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and documents and began to identify themes and concepts not captured by my conceptual approach. Some inductive codes were sub-codes related to the initial list of deductive codes. Other inductive codes were unrelated to the initial list. For instance, the data revealed that a key type of support for the focal charters was technical in nature. Thus, I added the code of "technical support," and included sub-codes within this category for "technical support organizations," "state authorizers," and "consultants." As I read through interview transcripts and fieldnotes, I developed definitions and examples of each code and compiled these into a final codebook. My final codebook consisted of 38 codes.

Analytic memo-writing. Analytic memos are meant not to summarize data, but to capture "emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 96). I engaged in memo-writing in several ways. First, when preparing fieldnotes, I both expanded my jottings into complete narratives and wrote analytic reflections on my field experiences. Second, I read through each interview transcript at least twice and wrote memos on themes that emerged across the collection. Finally, for the duration of data collection, I wrote memos to document themes, questions, and puzzles that arose in the field.

Early data analyses, conducted after about five months of data collection, informed my decisions on how to proceed with data collection during the remaining months of the study. These analyses took the form of developing codes, writing memos, and writing a conference paper on a subset of data (Castillo, 2018). This process of early analysis prompted me to interview specific individuals a second time and collect additional school-level data, such as family newsletters and classroom observations, in order to gain a richer understanding of each school's progressive founding mission.

Data displays. Finally, I created data displays and matrices to visualize themes and patterns in the data (Miles et al., 2014). I discussed these displays with research colleagues during the summer of 2018 in order to further refine my thinking. This process preceded the preparation of organizing and outlining the findings chapters that follow.

Part IV: Limitations and Strengths of the Research Design

As noted above, a limitation to this analysis stemmed from challenges I experienced in gaining access to a broader variety of independent, mission-oriented charter school types. I actively leveraged my personal and professional contacts to recruit an independent charter school that was founded in partnership with a community-based organization. My intention was to include in this study a total of four case study schools, aligned with the major types of mission-oriented charters described in the literature (Henig et al., 2005; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010). Yet I ultimately did not secure access to a fourth case study charter school.

However, I believe that focusing on only three case study schools enabled me to obtain a richer, more in-depth understanding of each school. It allowed me to develop relationships and rapport with informants over the course of a full academic year, and this rapport likely compelled

them to speak candidly with me during interviews, sometimes agreeing to more than one interview. I had the time to visit the case study schools on multiple occasions and attend multiple board trustee meetings, which enabled me to observe deeply how efforts to mobilize political, financial, and ideological support played out and evolved during my 10 months of data collection.

Chapter 5

The Case of Hudson Charter School

"I've had parents… criticize Principal Jolene [Agee] because she doesn't wander around the school and socialize with the kids. The woman has no time for that. She's on the phone with all these powers-that-be in the DOE [Department of Education]. She's on the phone with the politicians. She's on the phone with the attorney."
—Cornel Meza, Parent and Board Trustee, Hudson Charter School

This chapter is a case study of Hudson Charter School. It details how school leaders, board trustees, and advocates mobilized political, financial, and ideological support for Hudson Charter School amidst the unique political and financial challenges it faced as a unionized conversion charter school, one of only three in New York City. As a unionized school, Hudson was obligated to pay the salaries stipulated in union contracts, but this obligation proved to be a significant burden, as state funding for charter schools has been frozen since the Great Recession in 2009. Meanwhile, Hudson and other unionized charter schools were not included in union contract negotiations, and in turn, contracts do not account for the particular financial challenges they faced. In light of these challenges, I found that Hudson's school leaders spent considerable time and resources lobbying elected officials for increased state charter funding; partnering with charter advocacy organizations in these lobbying efforts; nurturing relationships with local politicians and community stakeholders to gain their political support for unionized charter funding; and mobilizing resources from community partners, government grants, foundations, and individual donors.

Many of Hudson's earliest staff members and parent volunteers remained on the school administration or Board of Trustees and had a deep understanding of and commitment to the school's founding progressive mission. Nevertheless, Hudson leaders' approaches to mobilizing political and financial support, at times, resembled those of market-oriented charter leaders. For example, Hudson's leaders successfully applied for a second charter and will open a second school in 2020 to maximize financial efficiency and attract greater political support. Moreover, Hudson participated in high-profile and well-funded CMO-led political advocacy efforts, recognizing that CMOs and their advocates enjoyed far more resources and capacity to organize such events. In these, and other, ways, Hudson's efforts to advance its market position in light of its political and financial challenges resembled what market-oriented charters do, have, and know to maximize organizational survival. Yet in exhibiting practices, resources, and knowledge that align with those of market-oriented charters, Hudson's leaders risked compromising aspects of the founding mission's core tenets, including those oriented around equity and democracy, hence experiencing some mission drift. The case of Hudson Charter School demonstrates how, in a competitive market environment, political pragmatism can compel school leaders to incorporate market values into their political advocacy and resource mobilization efforts, even when such values are opposed to their founding progressive missions.

This chapter comprises four parts. Part I provides an overview of the case, describing Hudson Charter School's mission and major challenges to sustaining this mission and surviving as an organization. In Part II, I explain what Hudson's school leaders, board trustees, and advocates did, had, and knew to mobilize political and financial support in a marketized educational environment where market-oriented charters such as CMOs garnered

disproportionate public, policy, and philanthropic attention. In Part III, I discuss the ways in which what Hudson's leaders and advocates did, had, and knew aligned with the practices, resources, and knowledge of market-oriented charters, and how Hudson's efforts to secure a competitive edge in the market were accompanied by some mission drift. In addition, I highlight the additional resources and knowledge Hudson's leaders possessed, enabling them to maintain sight of their founding mission and hence mitigate against complete mission drift. Finally, in Part IV, I discuss the possibilities for Hudson to maintain its founding mission in a market context as it progresses toward its school expansion plan and third charter term.

Part I: Overview of the Case

Spotlight on the Mission: The Annual Project-Based Learning Week

On a rainy morning in May 2018, Hudson's elementary students were hard at work on a variety of hands-on projects as part of their week-long experiential learning period. As is Hudson tradition, students would work all week on projects revolving around an interdisciplinary theme. For example, a class of 25 third grade students worked in groups on their exhibits for their chocolate museum. Throughout the semester, the students had been studying chocolate: its centrality to Aztec life, its role in the global economy, its impact on the rainforest ecosystem, and the journey from cacao bean to candy bar. For their culminating museum project, student groups each created a display to depict one aspect of the multifaceted chocolate story. One group shaped clay into cacao beans, while another sculpted goblets from which Aztec figurines would drink, and another used construction paper to create a rainforest in various stages of destruction. The students' creations would feature not only in a classroom museum, but also in a stop-motion animation video, thanks to Hudson's partnership with the Children's Museum of the Arts.

Meanwhile, in the school's basement kitchen, the cooking group, comprising about 12 students, along with two teachers, chatted in the school kitchen while snacking on the chocolate chip cookies that had just emerged from the oven. While eating, they discussed ideas for packaging the remaining cookies, along with logos, branding, and marketing ideas; they would sell the cookies later in the week to raise money for a school field trip. In the kindergarten classroom, students worked on a community-service project: they tied tassels onto the edges of brightly colored fleece blankets, which they would gift to elderly residents at the local assisted-living center. And several groups were scattered throughout New York City for their projects; for instance, visiting the New York Historical Society as part of their study of the immigrant experience, or a local farm to investigate permaculture.

The project-based learning week was at the heart of Hudson Charter School's founding mission. Aligned with the school's aim to empower teachers and promote their professional autonomy, teachers designed original thematic learning experiences based on their personal interests. Aligned with the school's pedagogical aim to teach the whole child through progressive, experiential approaches, this week nurtured students' curiosities through hands-on interdisciplinary learning. And in concert with the school's mission to develop students as global citizens committed to social justice, many projects revolved around the themes of community service, activism, and leadership. Finally, with the exception of the youngest grades, students collaborated in mixed-grade groups, in line with the school's mission to foster a close-knit, village-like learning community. My interviews and observations at Hudson over the course of the academic year, however, revealed that that these types of learning experiences were not limited to just one week. Rather, experiential learning, community service, leadership, activism,

the arts, and collaboration were infused throughout the pre-K–12 curriculum, though they were at the forefront during the annual project-based learning week.

This approach to teaching and learning was distinct from the regulated, "no-excuses" environment in many CMOs, where teachers place emphasis on improving students' outcomes on standardized assessments (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013). How did Hudson's leaders mobilize support for the school's organizational and curricular approaches in an environment where CMOs' approaches garnered high levels of policy and philanthropic attention? In the remainder of this section, I discuss the unique political, financial, and ideological challenges Hudson's leaders confronted, and the following sections describe how Hudson's leaders mobilized political and financial support in light of these challenges.

Financial and Political Challenges Constrained Mission Realization

The most significant challenge facing Hudson was its budget. When the school converted to charter status in 2000, it retained its collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT); the administrators' union, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA); and the staff union, District Council 37 (DC 37). Since Hudson's conversion, each union has negotiated new contracts with the City of New York, and each contract stipulates higher salary and benefit rates. At the time of data collection, Hudson was one of only three unionized conversion charters in New York City. These three schools were not included in any contract negotiations, yet they were obligated to pay the salaries and benefits stipulated in each negotiated contract. Hudson's leaders saw the lack of representation in contract negotiations as an issue in and of itself. But to make matters worse, state per-pupil funding for charter school students has lagged behind that for traditional public school students since the 2009–2010 school year, when the Governor and State Legislature froze the charter school funding formula in order to cut costs on the heels of Great Recession. The state lifted the freeze in the following year, raising charter per-pupil funding slightly by about $1,000. But the state enacted the freeze again in 2013, and state legislation in 2014 set the charter per-pupil amount at its 2010–2011 level. Although in subsequent years, the state has provided modest supplements to the charter per-pupil amount, from $250 per pupil in 2014 to $500 per pupil in 2016, the total charter per-pupil amount continues to be less than that for traditional public school students (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2017).

As a result, state funding for charter schools has not kept pace with changes to collective bargaining agreements. According to Principal Jolene Agee, lack of unionized charter representation in contract negotiations means that negotiations are based solely on the budgets of traditional public schools and neglect to account for charters' financial circumstances. Hence, diminished state funding for charters coupled with increased salary and benefit obligations have strained Hudson's budget. For example, in discussions about the 2019–2020 school year budget, Principal Jolene Agee and the Board of Trustees decided not to replace teachers who were retiring or relocating in order to cut costs while keeping most academic programs intact.

Hudson's leaders, board trustees, and advocates overwhelmingly agreed that their financial difficulties were tied to local and state politics. On the local level, because there are only three unionized charter schools in New York City, interviewees perceived that the Department of Education (DOE) and City Hall often do not understand such schools' unique financial challenges. Principal Jolene explained, "The charter movement is taken over by the networks," such that the DOE and City Hall "think it's too messy to deal with us" because "we don't look like Success [Academy]." Moreover, frequent turnover among City Hall staff required

Principal Jolene to explain Hudson's financial situation repeatedly to newcomers. In spring 2018, Principal Jolene wrote a three-page memo to City Hall explaining conversion charter schools' financial challenges. In the memo, entitled "The Conversion Charter School Crisis," Jolene quoted from the New York State Charter Schools Act, highlighting that employees in a unionized conversion charter school "shall be deemed to be included within the negotiating unit," yet unions do not explicitly attend to conversion charters' unique circumstances. She continued:

> Hudson and the other conversion charter schools in NYC have *no* seat at the bargaining tables between the City of New York and the three unions in our schools—DC 37, UFT and CSA—and therefore no voice in deciding upon terms for new contracts or on issues where contract interpretation disputes arise. Contract provisions and terms are decided for us and often with our interests and/or financial ability to meet the terms ignored.

Jolene further explained in her memo that Hudson's salary obligations were particularly high because of its commitment to recruiting and retaining experienced staff: "So, one could argue that our successful retention of highly qualified staff is actually hurting our financial viability!" She then proposed several recommendations for both the city and state, such as requiring unions to include conversion charters at the negotiating table, revising the charter funding formula, and amending the Charter Schools Act to allow unionized charters to negotiate new collective bargaining agreements.

This memo and Hudson's lobbying efforts seemed to have paid off: In June 2018, days before the city's budget deadline, Principal Jolene learned that City Hall included conversion charters in its budget. Yet Jolene noted that vague bureaucratic rules would determine when she would see the money:

> Even when we're getting money, the timing is uncertain. I just wrote an email today saying, 'Okay, so you said we're gonna get it after July 1st. What does that mean? Does that mean in a month? In a year?'… We can't afford to wait anymore. We don't have money sitting around. We're really in a place where we're living check to check, in a way.

Jolene's remark that "we don't have money sitting around" illustrates how dependent Hudson is on public funding, especially because the school is not connected to large sources of private funding, which I discuss later in this chapter.

On the state level, while the Charter Schools Act enjoyed bipartisan support at its outset, recent support for charter schools has generally fallen along complex partisan lines: the Democrat-led Assembly has not supported charter schools, whereas the Republican-led Senate has, with support from eight Democratic Senators, known as the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), who have caucused with Republicans on education and other policy issues (Jacobs, 2018). In addition, Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo has tended to side with the Republicans in supporting charter schools. Ongoing partisan battles have led to little change in state per-pupil funding for charter schools, although the Senate approved a budget in spring 2018 that included an appropriations figure of nearly $150,000 to be shared among New York City's three unionized conversion charters. Yet Hudson's leaders understood that the fate of charter school funding could change with the November 2018 election; Principal Jolene explained that

so much depends on "the winds of Albany." And indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, six of the eight IDC members were unseated by progressive candidates, leaving uncertain the future direction of state charter school policy and funding (Cramer, 2018).

Closely related to these political and financial challenges were what Hudson's longtime legal counsel, Trent Hindman, described as "misperceptions" about the charter school movement, often perpetuated by teachers' unions, even when some charters, such as Hudson, are unionized. He explained:

> You've got 500,000 members of the New York State Teachers' Union who, I think, misperceive what charter schools are and misunderstand what charter schools are and see them as a threat where perhaps they're not… Here in New York, charter schools can, and many are being, unionized.

Trent's comments are illustrative of how teachers' unions, in New York and nationally, generally oppose charters given most charters' rejection of tenure and collective bargaining rights (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). In this way, unions often did not recognize Hudson as a school that shared unions' commitment to protecting teachers and staff, instead viewing Hudson and all other charters as a "threat."

Many interview respondents attributed unions' negative misperceptions of charter schools in New York to Eva Moskowitz, Success Academy's CEO and an ardent union opponent. Indeed, Moskowitz has argued that New York City's UFT prioritizes its members' rights over students' needs and presents a significant barrier to education reform. Moskowitz has successfully advanced this narrative in New York in coalition with other CMOs and politically powerful charter advocacy organizations, many of which are funded by some of Success Academy's donors (Mahoney & Shapiro, 2014). According to Tanner Stack, Hudson's lobbyist, while Moskowitz and her coalition has "the marketing power and the money to always advocate," independent conversion charters such as Hudson do not, and thus, become inadvertently attached to the rhetoric casting charters as a union opponent. Augustus Levin, a Hudson teacher and board trustee, agreed, commenting,

> The leadership of the UFT doesn't necessarily support charter schools as a whole… But they're fighting against the larger CMOs. Eva Moskowitz is not really a friend of the UFT. So, we found ourselves thrown within that argument, in that mix… [but] we're not that kind of an organization.

Here, Trent, Tanner, and Augustus explained that the high-profile political battle between unions and CMOs drives public perceptions of charter schools, leaving unionized charter schools out of the picture. Inaccurate understandings of charter schools undermined Hudson's efforts to garner political attention and support for its financial challenges. Moreover, in addition to the unions, interview respondents explained that elected officials, including Mayor Bill de Blasio, often "paint with the same brush" CMOs and independent and conversion charters such as Hudson. Principal Jolene explained, "If you're mad because you think Success Academy is suspending students at too high a rate, go investigate that, and then don't just throw the blanket on the whole movement." Basil Greenfield, a staff member at one of New York State's charter authorization offices, similarly argued, "We need policymakers here in New York State to understand that most charter schools aren't Success Academy."

Given these political, financial, and ideological challenges to the school's continued operation and survival, Hudson's leaders turned to a variety of strategies for mobilizing support. In Part II, I discuss what they did, had, and knew in order to garner support and thus advance their competitive advantage in the charter school market.

Part II: What Hudson's Leaders, Board, and Advocates Did, Had, and Knew: Mobilizing Political and Financial Support in a Competitive Marketplace

What They Did

Strategic marketing and advertising. One way Hudson's leaders addressed the school's financial challenges was through direct fundraising appeals, which often involved marketing the school to prospective donors. For example, teachers raised funds for their classrooms through the Donors Choose website, a platform through which teachers can solicit donations for supplies or to support a particular project. Through Donors Choose, Hudson's third grade teacher raised about $500 worth of books for her class's study of chocolate, described above. On the website, this teacher provided a short description of her students and their needs:

> Some of us are talented artists and writers. Some of us are very musical and love to sing and dance. Some of us are budding mathematicians and growing scientists! Just like their interests are varied, so are my students' individual needs in the classroom. Many of my students speak two or more languages at home and receive extra English language support in our classroom. Around 30% of our class receive extra support in either reading, math, or both.

As Wilson and Carlsen (2016) explain, school websites operate as marketing mechanisms by projecting a particular image about the school as a way to attract applicants. Arguably, Hudson's Donors Choose pages leverage online marketing capacities to attract not applicants, but donors. The chocolate project attracted 12 donors who fully funded the appeal in less than two months; donors included the Donors Choose organization itself, which matched all donations made on January 25 as part of its First Million Fund (PR Newswire, 2018).

Given ongoing financial challenges, Development Director Roseann Street told me that all teachers would be required to fundraise through Donors Choose in the 2019–2020 school year, thus expanding the school's online marketing reach. However, contrary to Hudson's founding mission to advance equitable education and community responsibility, requiring teachers to act as "grantseekers" fosters their participation in an unequal market environment that commoditizes teaching and advantages teachers with access to affluent networks (Freedman, 2000). While fundraising through Donors Choose raised much-needed resources and thus advanced Hudson's position in the market, participating in this grant-funding program also perpetuated an inequitable market system that disproportionately rewarding schools and teachers with the capacity and skills to market themselves (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Freedman, 2000).

Replication and expansion. In 2016, Hudson received approval from its state authorizer to open a second charter school, which is scheduled to open in 2020. One rationale for expanding Hudson was to meet demand in the CSD for a Hudson education. As described in its application for a second school:

> Key reasons that Hudson determined that a replication charter school would be welcomed and beneficial in [the CSD] was the great student demand at Hudson, as evidenced by a waitlist with more than 3,500 signatures and the feedback it has received from parents and families in support of creating more opportunities for their children to attend a school using the Hudson academic model.

In addition to meeting community demand, interview respondents explained that a second school would render the school more financially efficient in a political climate of scarce resources for charters, particularly unionized ones. As Gregory Logue, Hudson's founding principal, explained, opening a second school would create "a different kind of financing, shared resources, which will help us in another few more years down the road." These comments suggest that the second school would boost the financial sustainability of the first school, aligning with the theory of action undergirding CMOs: to operate multiple schools under a single network to maximize efficiency and achieve economies of scale (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). Furthermore, Hudson's leaders explained that a second school would bring more political attention to Hudson as a successful educational model: the "second school helps the first school politically," as Principal Jolene noted at a Board of Trustees meeting. Laila Keyes, the Director of Operations, similarly explained that, as an independent charter school,

> Nobody's out there, really, to support us. They don't care if we're here, they don't care if we go. So, I think it puts us at a bit of a disadvantage, which is I think one of the reasons why we are moving to open up another school… You have more power when you have more behind you.

Hudson's rationales for replication—to achieve efficiency and attract greater political support—echo those of many CMOs and their advocates (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott, 2009). However, Hudson's leaders pointed out numerous ways in which their approach to school replication differed from that of CMOs. Edison Driscoll, a Hudson administrator and the future principal of Hudson II, explained that Hudson aims to grow slowly, in contrast to CMOs that add multiple schools to their network in only a few years. Indeed, Hudson II will open over 25 years after Hudson I opened, and, as Edison explained, a third school would likely not be added until after Hudson II completed its first charter term of 5 years. He remarked, "If you're a CMO, and you wanna replicate in a short period of time, you have to hire people that are not familiar with your model until they become part of your model." In contrast, at Hudson, "We want to develop our own staff with our culture and then move to a third school, where the people that are planning that third school are [already] part of [the staff]." As Edison's comments demonstrate, Hudson's leaders were attracted to the prospect of replicating Hudson's model to achieve efficiency and political clout, but wished to do so slowly, so that founding staff members of additional Hudson schools will have had many years of experience at an earlier Hudson iteration. This approach contrasts starkly with, for instance, that of Success Academy, which expanded its network from a single school in 2006 to over 40 in 2018.

Discouraging "opt-out." Hudson was established prior to the onset of the high-stakes accountability movement that raised the pressure on schools to demonstrate student proficiency, leading many teachers to "teach to the test" (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Despite the introduction of accountability pressures, over the years, Hudson maintained its founding mission to institute progressive pedagogy centered on experiential

learning designed to develop students' civic-mindedness. Indeed, the charter application for Hudson II specified not only academic achievement goals, as required by the charter authorizer, but also the following "mission-centered goals":

> 1) Through qualitative measures, including student engagement in service learning, social activism, leadership development and community-service activities, the school will live its motto, 'Developing Leaders for the Future of New York.' 2) In support of Hudson II's mission to develop leaders and global citizens, students will regularly engage with community and cultural partners through experiential learning opportunities, interdisciplinary units developed in core subjects, and the high school leadership program matching students with internships and outside elective credits.

Yet although Hudson's school leaders acknowledged the limits of standardized tests and critiqued their centrality to their charter agreement, they appeared to do little to push back on them, and hence seemed to accept their role in the contemporary "audit culture" (Apple, 2005). Indeed, although the school's mission was rooted in developing global citizens committed to social change, school leaders and board trustees discouraged student activism around "opting out" of standardized tests, perceiving test score data to matter for attracting political and financial support and for the school's charter renewal prospects. To illustrate, in a letter to Principal Jolene regarding the upcoming charter renewal process and shared at a Board of Trustees meeting, two board trustees wrote:

> We feel it is important to collect accurate data by including all students in our accountability measures. There is an 'opt-out' provision, which many families throughout the city and state are using to avoid participation in the testing program. What is Hudson doing to challenge this practice?

Thus, despite its founding mission to educate the whole child through hands-on learning, leadership, activism, and community-service experiences, the prevalence of test-based accountability in the current market-oriented educational environment compelled Hudson's leaders to compromise some aspects of this mission to generate the data that they believed would bring much-needed resources and political support to the school.

What They Had

Full-time development staff. Hudson's Development Director, Roseann Street, and her assistant, Lorrie Fitch, worked full-time on writing grants, organizing fundraisers, and securing institutional partnerships and other in-kind supports for the school. In this way, Hudson's administration resembled a CMO home office, many of which also employ full-time development or grant-writing staff (Farrell et al., 2012). However, unlike CMOs, many of the foundation grants Roseann and Lorrie secured were for small amounts, of $2000 to $5000, targeted for a specific purpose, such as the school drama program, rooftop garden, or curricular projects. Roseann explained, "We haven't [gotten] any really big ticket items this particular school year" from foundations. Moreover, these small grants tend to come from small family foundations, rather than large ones with deeper pockets. Roseann expressed some mixed feelings around connecting with large foundations for political reasons: "The Walton Foundation has come out with certain things that are appealing to us in terms of our second school even though

their political bent is something that we haven't really aligned ourselves with. Plus, they're not really interested in us because we do have a union relationship." In spring 2018, Roseann applied for a Gates Foundation grant that would fund the development of a student information system, an interesting choice given that Gates is politically aligned with Walton in supporting CMOs and opposing unions (Reckhow et al., 2016; Scott, 2009). Yet Roseann maintained that securing the Gates grant "would be such a windfall… [it] would change our lives dramatically." At the time of data collection, however, most of Hudson's secured grants were modest amounts from small foundations, which did not sustain the school the way a large endowment would.

A more robust source of funding came from government grants, including rental assistance grants from New York State and a federal food program grant. In addition, a charter school dissemination grant from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) supported Hudson's partnership with a traditional public school, with which it shared best practices around college preparation. Other legislative grants from the State Senator's office supported various curricular programs, such as the high school Advanced Placement courses. These grants ranged from $5,000 to the $500,000 NYSED dissemination grant—much larger amounts than those generated from small family foundations. Roseann and Lorrie also secured a number of in-kind grants and donations from government and community organizations. These included after-school and professional development services, as well as supplies for curricular programs.

A dedicated fundraising board. To mobilize additional funds for the school, in 2011, Roseann Street and several school community members organized the Friends of Hudson Board, a 503(c)3 nonprofit organization intended to be primarily a fundraising entity for the school. The Board comprised four members: Roseann and her assistant, Lorrie, Hudson alumnus and current board trustee Freddie Seiler, and Mariella Mckenna, the parent of a Hudson middle school student. According to its 990 IRS form for 2016, the Friends of Hudson Board had a modest account of around $8,000 in 2016. One of the board's goals was to increase its fundraising capacity by mobilizing Hudson's alumni. Freddie explained:

> Really, you have to engage your alumni. I think that's really where the financials come from. If you look at… any top endowment, it's really about giving back from alumni. I think once Friends of Hudson becomes more active and becomes more prominent within the alumni community, then Hudson will get stronger in terms of donations and alumni giving back.

However, Friends of Hudson's board members acknowledged that there were limits to this form of fundraising. Freddie noted that Hudson's alumni base was thin compared to other schools: "A lot of people have graduated from [Hudson], but it is also a relatively small school. So, there [are] not as many alumni compared to Brooklyn Tech [or] a lot of the other public and private high schools in New York City." In addition, the school's alumni network was generally not very affluent or high-status. Freddie appeared to be an exception, as he worked for a prominent financial institution. Multiple interview informants expressed hope that he would connect the school to sources of private wealth, and in the last year, Hudson's leaders recruited Freddie to serve on three boards: the Boards of Trustees for Hudson I and II and the Friends of Hudson Board. Freddie has made monetary donations to the school, but he did not seem yet to have connected Hudson to other sources of large funds. Yet recruiting Freddie to serve on three boards illustrates Hudson's efforts to advance its market position by building its network of high-status and affluent donors (Scott & Holme, 2002).

The limited capacity of the Friends of Hudson Board led to modest fundraising achievements. For example, in spring 2018, the Board organized a "Paint and Sip" event, combining an art lesson with wine tasting and aimed at fundraising to support the elementary art teacher. Flyers for the event included photos of student art work and the following description: "These are just some of the wonderful pieces children have created working with [this teacher]. Your participation in the event will help us raise money to keep this great program going." Coupled with direct appeals to parents, the Board raised about $3,000, "which was okay," Roseann said, but not sufficient to retain the teacher for the following school year. Roseann also noted the limitations of such events because "our community does not have very deep pockets," and indeed, nearly 70% of Hudson students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch in 2017.

The board's limited capacity also impeded their ability to translate ideas into action. For example, Mariella shared plans to market the school to potential donors, which had not yet come to fruition. She explained:

> I wanted to organize an online auction… But we need to get donations, so it does require time to get the donations, and then we have to get somebody to photograph them when we set up the online website page. And there are a lot of ways to get that done for free but we have to plan that out… So that's a plan that we have right now, we just need the hands.

Roseann effectively summed up the Board's challenges: "The events are exhausting because we just have so little bandwidth to do this kind of stuff."

A contract with a lobbying and government relations firm. Beginning in 2015, Hudson has worked closely with a boutique lobbying and government relations firm, specifically the firm's senior vice president, Tanner Stack. According to Hudson's 990 IRS form for 2016, lobbying expenses totaled $25,000. Principal Jolene explained that lobbying elected officials, more so than fundraising through grants or direct appeals, was the most effective way to bring money into the school through legislative change. Hence, she believed that paying Tanner and his firm was well worth the expense. According to Tanner, his firm's strategy involved researching elected officials' position on charter schools, correcting any misunderstandings they might have about the charter schools in their districts, and "working with them to be advocates for those schools." He argued that this approach helps to build productive relationships with elected officials, unlike the approaches of many CMOs such as Success Academy, which aim to pressure elected officials through "scorched earth tactics." Tanner and his colleagues achieved a significant political victory in securing Senate appropriations funding, to be shared among New York City's three conversion schools. This funding signaled that the State Senate was persuaded about the financial burdens experienced by conversion charter schools such as Hudson. Yet given how state funding for charters could shift as politics shift, Principal Jolene foresaw continuing to work with Tanner and his firm for the foreseeable future, especially given ambiguity regarding how the November 2018 election could alter charter politics: "I don't see giving Tanner up so quickly, but it would be great if we could." In addition, Jolene hoped that Tanner could help secure a longer-term funding solution, rather than year-by-year agreements.

Affiliations with charter school advocacy organizations. Along with Tanner, Hudson partnered and worked closely with the Coalition for Community Charter Schools (C3S), where Principal Jolene served as a board trustee. As discussed in Chapter 1, a group of independent charter school leaders in New York City established C3S, a membership organization, in 2013.

These leaders wanted to bring more visibility to independent charters and counter the financial and political dominance of CMOs. Moreover, the founders of C3S aimed to bring independent charters together as a unified voice in the political arena, where they could leverage their collective concerns. C3S has secured meetings with elected officials on the state and local levels to advocate on behalf of independent charter schools, including unionized conversion schools. In addition, through Principal Jolene, C3S connected with Tanner's lobbying firm and formally hired them in spring 2018. Tanner and his colleagues presented at a January 2018 C3S meeting, where they spoke to around 30 school leaders about the importance of engaging their local elected officials and mobilizing community members and families to support their schools. In attendance at this meeting were Principal Jolene, Roseann Street, and several other Hudson administrators and board trustees, who shared their political advocacy experiences, as well.

Hudson's leaders were also willing to collaborate with CMO-affiliated advocacy organizations, such as Families for Excellent Schools (FES), which set a statewide lobbying record in 2014 (Mahoney, 2015).[4] FES's donors included hedge fund billionaires Daniel Loeb and Julian Robertson, who also financially supported Success Academy (Chapman, 2015). Although some Hudson staff and advocates critiqued FES's advocacy approaches and political ties, they also considered the high visibility and political clout of FES to Hudson's benefit in a political environment where independent charter schools are little understood or seen. As Tanner Stack explained, "The thing that I learned about lobbying over the years is that it's almost like being a professional athlete, pick your sport. You end up switching sides, switching teams so much that everybody becomes friends and everybody has worked with each other on one project or another." Roseann Street similarly explained that Principal Jolene often says to her staff, "We play in the sandbox with everybody that makes sense for us."

This willingness to collaborate was on display at a fall 2017 board meeting, where among the distributed materials were documents from FES detailing action items for all schools to complete as part of FES's campaign to demand equitable charter school funding from Albany. The action items included a draft letter for school leaders to sign and send to Albany, as well as the dates of upcoming FES-sponsored Albany trips, during which food and transportation would be provided. Roseann Street explained that she and her colleagues "pick and choose" the FES events they join:

> For certain issues where they're advocating for one or two particular issues that we can get behind, then we're happy to go up [to Albany] with them and be part of their yellow T-shirts and wave their banners and stuff because they do it so much more efficiently and better than we do. They've got a lot more money to hire the buses, and bring the muffins and the water, and the T-shirts, and all that stuff.

Notably, however, Tristan Timmons, a co-director of C3S, explained that he and colleagues from other independent charter schools turned down invitations from FES and Success Academy to participate in their marches and rallies, as they did not agree with their advocacy tactics. His comments suggest that C3S, which counts Hudson leaders as active participants, was still in the process of defining with whom it would ally politically.

[4] Families for Excellent Schools closed abruptly in February 2018 amid sexual harassment allegations against its CEO (Taylor, 2018).

Finally, Hudson's connection with the nonprofit charter school facilities support organization Civic Builders also signaled Hudson's willingness to collaborate with CMO supporters. Hudson II's Board of Trustees hired Civic Builders to assist in the process of locating a suitable private space for the new school. Yet Civic Builders has deep ties to the Gates Foundation and the broader landscape of CMOs: Civic Builders has received loans from the Gates Foundation to develop charter school facilities in Rhode Island (Pothering, 2016), and staff from the Gates Foundation sit on Civic Builders' board (Civic Builders, 2018). In addition, schools in Civic Builder's "portfolio" include many affiliated with large CMOs supported by the Gates Foundation, including Achievement First, KIPP, and Uncommon Schools.

Community partnerships and support. Hudson also enjoyed relationships with the local community, which lent critical political support to the school. Principal Jolene noted, "We like to prove ourselves by just working with people. We work with so many organizations, so many cultural and community-based… We host community forums. We open our building." Among the civic groups Hudson welcomed was a Latinx social justice organization that was generally politically opposed to charter schools. Community support was evident in the array of stakeholders who supported Hudson's application for a second charter school, including members of a neighborhood Catholic parish and after-school organization. As Principal Jolene explained, building support for Hudson II has required "making friends with people" in the community. Furthermore, similar to how market-oriented charters partner with external organizations as a way to access resources and build capacity in a financially challenging environment, Hudson had many formal community partners, such as local museums and arts and cultural organizations, which have provided enrichment activities for Hudson students throughout the years (Ascher et al., 2001; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010).

Beyond community stakeholders, Hudson's key supporters included the other two independent, unionized, conversion charter schools in New York City. Together with these schools, Hudson's leaders discussed shared political challenges and advocacy strategies. As noted above, these schools all worked with Tanner Stack and his lobbying firm. Moreover, these schools' leaders were in regular communication regarding shared technical issues. For example, Hudson's Director of Operations, Laila Keyes, shared that she no longer attends school operations and other technical support workshops at the New York City Charter School Center, finding it more useful to communicate with her counterparts at other unionized charter schools. She explained:

> I used to go [to the Charter Center] in the early days to make connections, but… a lot of it just doesn't apply, because we are so unique. I mean, just the union status, our financial structure is very different…We do have two other union schools we are close with, like the operations people… So, those would be the people I would reach out to, other unionized schools.

Here, Laila's comments reveal the importance of collaborating with the small number of charters who share similar challenges related to their status as unionized and conversion schools when other charter support organizations, such as the Charter Center, cater disproportionately to non-unionized charters.

Hudson's high levels of community support stemmed from its longevity as an organization; it has been a mainstay in its neighborhood for over 2 decades. Roseann explained:

> Over the years, we are a lasting entity. The community loves us… I think we're unique in that we do have so many community partners that have been coming to our building for a long, long time. It makes us really rooted.

Principal Jolene echoed these comments, saying, "We have spent lots of time building good relationships in the community, which I think is hugely important, and I think it's one of the reasons we're still here today, because we do have people who are our friends." According to Gregory Logue, Hudson provided a sense of continuity and constancy as the neighborhood changed since the 1990s, from a largely Asian and South American immigrant neighborhood to one that is increasingly gentrifying. Tanner Stack offered a slightly different perspective, explaining that his firm's lobbying strategy involves convincing stakeholders that their local charter school matters for community stability. He explained:

> The last thing that anybody in any community wants to see happen is a school close. Even people who are anti-charter. It's sometimes for their own selfish reasons. They're like, oh gosh, well, if this school closes, then PS 180-something is now going to be overcrowded because all of the kids are going to go there. It brings instability. So, we research and look for those folks as well and say, hey, this is what may happen.

Robust levels of community support also likely stemmed from the fact that community service and leadership were key components of Hudson's curriculum. As alumnus and trustee Freddie Seiler explained, "I think the exposure of Hudson has gotten much stronger and has really spread itself over the past 20 years. I remember when I went there, they had internships for a select group of students and they were in the local community, whether it was in retail or politics or finance. It was something that they were trying to establish as a core element of the school."

These deep community connections were also critical to the process of recruiting new staff members and board trustees. Indeed, as explained in its most recent charter,

> To fill board vacancies, as well as key staff positions, Hudson Charter School leverages its networks and relationships, along with those of its Board of Trustees and community-based partners and supporters. The collective network of these individuals and organizations will continue to be an important factor in Hudson's ability to attract, retain and develop high quality board members and staff.

That Hudson leveraged its community ties to build its board, rather than cultivating connections with business and finance professionals, contrasts with the board recruitment approaches of Liberty and Empire, as I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7.

In sum, nurturing relationships with the broad array of local civic and community organizations served to maintain Hudson's goodwill with its neighbors, rendering the school a mainstay in the community. This community support was key to Hudson's renewal and school replication efforts, as well as to maintaining the human resources needed for its continued operations. Moreover, Hudson's community connections contrasted with many CMOs' lack of community engagement, including instances where they expand operations despite community opposition (Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011).

What They Knew

Institutional memory. At the time of data collection, many of Hudson's earliest staff members and parents continued to be involved in the school, contributing a deep institutional memory of the school's evolution since the mid-1990s. For instance, nearly all of Hudson's administrators in 2017 began their tenure as parent volunteers in the 1990s, including Jolene, Roseann, and Laila. These individuals, and other staff members with similar backgrounds, were affectionately known as "starents," a portmanteau of "staff member" and "parent." In addition, many of Hudson's academic leaders, including Edison Driscoll, the future principal of Hudson II, had a decade or more of teaching experience at Hudson. Moreover, Hudson's Board of Trustees included numerous individuals who similarly had years of involvement in the school, whether as a founding staff member, alumnus, teacher, or parent; including Gregory Logue, the founding principal, and Freddie Seiler, a member of one of the first graduating classes. And as discussed above, Hudson enjoyed numerous long-time relationships with community partners, who lent in-kind support to the school in the form of student programming. Hudson staff members responsible for securing institutional partnerships included a former parent and alumna, both full-time Hudson employees. Gregory Logue explained that these individuals mattered greatly to the process of securing community support, as they had "a deep understanding of the school and very important ability to articulate the school mission to outside partners."

Over decades of service, Hudson's leadership team and governing board honed a deep understanding of, and investment in, the school's mission. This stands in stark contrast to the leadership and boards of many CMOs, whose members tend not to have any educational experience, hailing from professional backgrounds in business, nonprofit management, and law (Kretchmar et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, many CMOs and market-oriented charter schools rely on a steady pipeline of teachers trained at alternative teacher preparation programs, such as Teach For America, whose corps members are trained over 5-week period often leave the classroom after their 2-year commitment (Trujillo et al., 2017). Relatedly, whereas many CMO boards and central offices are often closed to family and community input (Buras, 2011), Hudson's leadership structure includes a third "prong": a governance committee comprising representatives of all stakeholder groups—staff, students, families, and community members—who oversee the institution of the school's mission and vision. A commitment to recruiting and retaining mission-aligned and experienced teachers, and involving them and other community members in school governance, lent Hudson a deep institutional memory rarely seen in market-oriented charters such as CMOs. This institutional memory served to mitigate against mission drift, which I discuss in Part III.

"Political savvy." In the last 2 decades, Hudson's leaders developed much knowledge regarding the political arena surrounding charter schools and how to navigate it. This deep knowledge was on display during Hudson's participation in the annual Charter School Advocacy Day, organized by the New York City Charter School Center ("Charter Center") and the Northeast Charter School Network (NECSN). During this event, held every February, charter school staff, students, and parents travelled to Albany to meet with their elected officials and advocate for increased charter school funding and a more hospitable state policy environment for charters. Although the Charter Center and NECSN provided training videos, pamphlets, and "talking points" about state funding and policy to guide conversations with elected officials, representatives from Hudson appeared to have their own script. I accompanied Hudson's Development Director Roseann Street and a group of five Hudson staff members and parents to their meeting with Vince Salgado, a staffer in the office of the State Senator representing

Hudson's electoral district. Roseann explained to Vince the budgetary challenges that stemmed from Hudson's status as a unionized charter school. She also raised concern that one of the Senator's recent speeches, in which he made "blanket" statements about charters, signaled that he did not understand Hudson's particular challenges. Roseann told Vince that her main request was for the Senator to call City Hall and ask the Mayor to provide additional funding for conversion charter schools. As this example illustrates, Hudson leaders took advantage of the fact that the Charter Center and NECSN took care of all the lobbying logistics, but their specific financial circumstances as a unionized charter compelled them to lobby on behalf of their own interests, rather than on behalf of the charter school movement more broadly.

Similarly, Principal Jolene understood that local elected officials were a key source of political support in an arena where charters are contested and subject to misperceptions, as discussed above. To generate their support, Jolene invited local officials to visit the school soon after they were appointed or elected. Recent guests to Hudson included education officials, such as the Regent representing Hudson's education district and Chancellor Carmen Fariña; and local politicians, such as the Senator and Representative representing Hudson's electoral district. Jolene even invited officials not expected to be in office long, including an Assembly Member who was filling an unexpectedly vacant seat for the spring and summer months before the November 2018 election. Developing such relationships paid off in numerous ways. For instance, the offices of the Assembly Member and State Senator representing Hudson's electoral district each awarded the school a technology grant for the 2018–2019 school year. In addition, the State Senator, Assembly Members, and District Superintendent all wrote letters of support to accompany Hudson's application for a second school. Relatedly, endorsements from local elected and education officials have been favorable for Hudson's two renewals to date. Furthermore, as Hudson administrators searched for facilities for its second school in a competitive real estate market, they noted that local elected officials could potentially be of great assistance, as board trustee Augustus Levin described: "Deals are made for public spaces between public officials and private entities… So, we're having conversations with our representatives, because we know that they know where spaces are."

Interviewees generally agreed that Justine deserves much credit for cultivating Hudson's political knowledge and skills, demonstrating her role as a charismatic leader who knows how to advocate effectively for the school's interests (Wells et al., 1999). As Augustus explained, "Kudos to Jolene because she's really, truly a political operative in a lot of ways, really. She knows how to make connections and form alliances, even with people [who] may not necessarily be in our corner." Tanner Stack, Hudson's lobbyist, echoed these sentiments: "If Jolene weren't such a kickass school administrator, we'd hire her." Department of Education official Nikia Spear similarly remarked on Jolene's "political savvy." Nikia explained that Jolene "knows exactly who to go to and what to say," hence resembling many CMO leaders, who generally know better "what levers to push" relative to independent charter schools. Arguably, regular engagement in the political arena has helped Jolene to develop her political knowledge and skills over time; she estimated devoting forty to fifty percent of her time to political advocacy activities. Notably, Hudson's administrative structure enabled her to do so, as academic leadership was devolved to other senior staff, similar to how CMOs separate operational support from instructional leadership responsibilities (Farrell et al., 2012). Indeed, Principal Jolene resembled another highly-visible New York City charter school CEO, Eva Moskowitz, who similarly devotes much time in the political arena and has likewise earned a reputation as a skilled politician (Shapiro, 2017a).

Part III: Evaluating Hudson's Survival Strategies

What Hudson's leaders, board, and advocates did, had, and knew somewhat resembled what market-oriented charters do, have, and know as they endeavor to advance their competitive advantage in the market environment. For example, Hudson engaged in strategic marketing practices and pursued a school expansion plan. In addition, Hudson possessed many of the critical resources common among market-oriented charter schools, including dedicated development staff and affiliations with powerful political advocates, including a professional lobbyist. The full-time development staff resembled the kind of organizational support within a CMO home office. Furthermore, Hudson's leaders exhibited a desire to build its network of affluent donors, as illustrated by their recruitment of alumnus Freddie Seiler, a finance professional, to three governing boards.

Hudson also possessed some resources and areas of expertise not common across market-oriented charters. For example, the Friends of Hudson board engaged alumni and community members in fundraising for the school. Similarly, Hudson enjoyed longstanding support from a range of local community stakeholders. Finally, Hudson's deep institutional memory and political savvy were key knowledge areas that facilitated its fidelity to the mission and organizational survival. While aligning with some of traits of market-oriented charter schools, Hudson's community rootedness and institutional memory in particular helped to keep the school in sight of its founding progressive mission, in turn mitigating against mission drift.

Market-Oriented Practices: Maximized Hudson's Competitive Market Position, but Undermined the Progressive Mission

Compromising equity. The ubiquity of market values appeared to have shaped Hudson's efforts to ensure organizational survival, sometimes contradicting the progressive tenets of the school's founding mission. For example, although discouraging students from opting out of the state tests allowed the school to have the data needed to paint a favorable picture of student achievement for renewal, it also undermined the school's mission to develop students' citizenship and social justice competencies. In addition, although marketing the school to prospective donors, such as through the Donors Choose website, was an effective means of mobilizing resources in an environment of financial challenges, doing so perpetuated a market system that encourages competition for scarce resources rather than equitable redistribution (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Freedman, 2000). Moreover, this competitive environment advantages those already relatively privileged or with access to high-status networks, and effectively rewarded Hudson for having access to such networks (Scott & Holme, 2002).

Further, although opening a second school would bring increased educational choice to local families, meet the high community demand for Hudson's educational model, and foster efficient use of shared resources, scholars have also demonstrated how school choice systems exacerbate competition and inequity (Brown & Makris, 2018). As Brown and Makris demonstrate, long waitlists can lend charter schools the veneer of prestige often associated with elite private schools, perpetuating competition for coveted spots and thus undermining equitable access. Harriet Gold, a board trustee, acknowledged the impact of school choice on inequity, commenting, "It's hard to say why should this tiny handful of kids from a lottery be able to get these benefits, but we can't expand that to the rest of the city, to the rest of the public school sector." However, this sentiment was an exception, as most interview participants considered Hudson's replication to be a boon to the community.

In addition to advancing equitable education, key components of Hudson's founding mission were collaboration and community-building, in light with the communitarian tenets of progressive education (Dewey, 1900/1990; Engel, 2000). Staff aimed not only to foster a spirit of collaboration within the school, but also across the broader public school community, consistent with the charter movement's original aim to share best practices with other schools (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). Hudson continued to fulfill this aim by, for example, sharing best practices with a traditional public school with the support of a NYSED Charter School Dissemination Grant. Hudson also collaborated often with other independent unionized charter schools in the political advocacy realm, and with a broader collection of independent charters through the school's membership in C3S. Yet simultaneously, competitive market pressures compelled Hudson to hire a private lobbyist, at a $25,000 per year expense, in order to access state funding. Moreover, according to its 990 IRS tax form for 2016, Hudson paid its legal counsel over $67,000 to assist with the legal dimensions of its advocacy work. The extensive financial and human resources Hudson devoted to advocacy and fundraising likely exceeded those of other independent charters, particularly newer ones, placing Hudson at a competitive advantage over those that may not have had similar resources. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, smaller and newer independent charter schools still in their start-up years were less likely to possess such funds to devote to political advocacy and lobbying. In displaying a willingness to secure and maintain a competitive advantage over other schools, Hudson departed somewhat from its founding commitment to communitarian values.

Compromising teacher autonomy. In addition, Hudson's expansion plan promised to advance the school's market position by facilitating more efficient use of resources, garnering greater political attention and support, and capturing a larger segment of the charter market. In each of these ways, Hudson may come to resemble a CMO. Doing so may compromise Hudson's founding mission to empower teachers and promote their professional growth, as scholars have demonstrated that CMOs' centralized curricula constrain teacher autonomy (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010; Torres, 2014). At the time of data collection, staff were in the process of clarifying the exact relationship between Hudson I and Hudson II. Edison Driscoll explained that the relationship would involve "some sort of central support administration that would support all the schools, like a CMO, but not really, because these people work here at the school," as opposed to a distant home office. In addition, the Hudson II charter application described the school's "partnership" with Hudson I:

> The purpose of the partnership is to ensure that Hudson II has support and information from the replicated school as it launches and implements the school model… Perhaps the most meaningful outcome of the partnership will be an alliance between the two schools that will facilitate and promote collaboration among professionals at each school, shared professional development and similar initiatives and sharing of best practices and ideas to improve programs and student outcomes at each school.

However, it remains to be seen whether Hudson I will remain a supportive partner to Hudson II or evolve into a more managerial role akin to that of a CMO (DiMartino, 2013). Given that Hudson I's school administration already displayed some CMO-like practices, it is possible that the relationship between the two schools, and any additional Hudson schools to open in the coming years, will come to resemble that of a CMO, albeit one smaller in size than many prominent networks boasting schools in the double-digits (Miron & Gulosino, 2013). Should this

come to pass, Hudson's founding mission around autonomy and teacher empowerment will likely be impacted.

Mission drift among independent charter advocates? Important to note, too, is the potential for mission drift in C3S, one of Hudson's main political advocacy partners. C3S's recently-launched national affiliate, the Coalition of Public Independent Charter Schools (CPICS), has developed a relationship with the National Association for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS). The co-directors of C3S presented at NAPCS's summer 2018 conference, and the directors of each organization discussed the possibility of establishing an annual "Broad Prize" for an independent charter school. Since 2012, the Broad Foundation has awarded a $250,000 prize each year to a CMO that has demonstrated high levels of student achievement; the winning CMO is announced at the NAPCS annual conference. While affiliating with NAPCS in these ways would bring more exposure to the burgeoning CPICS, doing so may also compromise CPICS's aim to illuminate the distinct characteristics and political interests of independent charter schools. Indeed, if independent charter schools were to compete for a cash prize that awarded student achievement, they may increasingly adopt an outcomes-oriented approach to pedagogy at the expense of their founding progressive pedagogical missions. Moreover, such a competition would signal CPICS's willingness to participate in an unequal educational market where schools vie for scarce resources rather than collectively advance a progressive education policy agenda oriented around equitable resource distribution. However, at the time of data collection, it was not clear to what extent Principal Jolene, as a C3S board member, was involved in launching a national organization or partnering with NAPCS to design such a competition.

Additional Practices: Keeping Sight of the Mission and Mitigating Against Mission Drift

Hudson exhibited additional resources and knowledge that facilitated its mobilization of political and financial support and, in turn, advanced its market position while remaining aligned with its progressive mission. For example, in prioritizing local neighborhood relationships through a service-oriented curriculum as well as through the leaders' own outreach efforts, Hudson adhered to the democratic and equity-oriented tenets of its founding mission. Hudson benefited politically and organizationally form its deep community ties. Indeed, the local community supported the school through providing institutional support in the form of after-school and arts programming, as well as political support, writing letters and signing petitions to support Hudson's charter renewals and application for a second school. Arguably, community support has been vital to Hudson's longevity. These forms of support signaled that local stakeholders saw the school as an important component of the community fabric, perhaps best illustrated by the social justice group that generally opposed charter schools, yet participated with Hudson in community forums and events. Similarly, the community-wide governance committee provided an avenue through which various stakeholder participated in collective, democratic spaces, overseeing the enactment of the school's mission. This venue further strengthened Hudson's ties to its community and was in concert with the democratic and communitarian tenets of the school's founding mission.

Hudson also limited mission drift by maintaining deep institutional memory through the staff and board members who were with the school since its earliest years and involved in the development and early implementation of the school's mission. Importantly, they were able to design, refine, and firmly plant Hudson's progressive mission throughout the late 1990s, prior to the widespread marketization of charter schools in New York City and nationally, and they carried this experience throughout the school's subsequent decades (DiMartino & Scott, 2012;

Lewis, 2013). Hudson's robust teacher and staff retention rate stands in stark contrast to CMOs, which experience high levels of teacher turnover (Torres, 2014). Scholars argue that high turnover across CMOs is rooted in the demanding workload, contributing to burnout, as well as the lack of autonomy emerging from a prescriptive work environment (Lake et al., 2010; Torres, 2014). In contrast, Hudson was founded to promote teacher autonomy, and by retaining its collective bargaining agreements upon converting to charter status, the school adhered to contractual stipulations pertaining to teachers' workload, presumably mitigating against burnout. Moreover, in committing to retaining experienced teachers, despite the impact on the school's budget, Hudson effectively promoted a culture recognizing teachers' professionalism, in contrast to many market-oriented charters that rely on a steady stream of teachers prepared by alternative certification programs such as Teach For America, whose recruits enter the classroom after only 5 weeks of training (Kretchmar et al., 2014). Hence, Hudson's retention of long-time staff members appears to be evidence of adherence to its founding mission to promote autonomy and professionalism. However, as discussed above, shifting to a CMO-like management model could undermine this mission in the future.

Importantly, Hudson's central political operative, Principal Jolene, was among Hudson's long-time staff members, having begun her tenure at Hudson as a parent volunteer in the 1990s. Thus, she presumably brought a deep understanding of and commitment to Hudson's mission when engaging in the political arena to mobilize support for the school and advance its survival prospects in the competitive market environment.

Part IV: Looking Ahead: Maintaining the Mission in a Market-Based Context

That Hudson's leaders were able to hone and solidify their progressive mission prior to the widespread marketization of public education was not lost on Gregory Logue, Hudson's founding principal. He remarked that, prior to converting to charter status, "the school had 8 years to practice before becoming a charter school." He continued, "I've always wondered how schools can survive in their first few years focusing on curriculum and sorting the politics. We had to do it in two different stages with a very safe harbor." In contrast, charter schools today are under intense accountability pressures the moment they open (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010), compelling some school leaders to engage in selective enrollment practices (Jabbar, 2015). Moreover, many charter school leaders aggressively market the school to potential families and donors in order to survive in a competitive environment (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018) and often hire managerial experts in place of experienced educators under the assumption that business-minded leaders will run effective and efficient schools (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott, 2008). Further, the intense pressures around charter renewal in New York City push school leaders to secure their market position a relatively short amount of time before their charter term expires (Ascher, Echazarreta, Jacobowitz, McBride, Troy et al., 2003). As Gregory put it:

> Now you have 1 or 2 years, and how [do] you establish a school culture, norms, behaviors for children, for staff, for parents, [in] 1 or 2 years? I have no idea how these charter schools are able to do it. And they are doing it. But I have no idea… [Now] you open up, and the clock is ticking.

Despite having honed the school's educational and organizational missions from relatively "safe harbor," as the politics surrounding charter schools evolved since 2000,

Hudson's leaders appear to have adapted, as well. In particular, as the political and institutional environment became more market-oriented, Hudson's leaders, too, responded by adopting market-like approaches to mobilizing political, financial, and ideological support, a pattern organizational theorists describe as "institutional isomorphism" (Huerta, 2009). In thinking and behaving in market terms, Hudson's leaders, board trustees, and advocates furthered the school's prospects of organizational survival in an environment of scarce political and financial resources. However, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, they also compromised somewhat the school's founding equity and democracy missions, causing some degree of mission drift.

Yet, because the school effectively maintained a community orientation, and because it successfully retained many long-time and mission-driven staff members, the extent to which Hudson adapted to the market was modest. Indeed, an array of community stakeholders, from elected officials to civic and arts organizations to local families, have become invested in the success and survival of Hudson's progressive mission over more than 2 decades. This, then, suggests that Hudson's survival prospects in the contemporary market environment were aided by its longevity as a community institution. Yet as Gregory's comments suggest, were Hudson to be founded today, rather than over 20 years ago, its progressive pedagogical mission and democratic, distributed leadership model might not be so viable.

An educational market incentivizes efficiency and quantitative measures of achievement (Engel, 2000). In contrast, it does not reward Hudson's democratic, distributed leadership approach, teacher empowerment opportunities, hands-on and progressive pedagogical models, or commitment to developing students into global citizens. Hence, the case of Hudson Charter School is additional evidence of "the limits to the market metaphor" (Henig, 1994), and illustrates that independent charter schools founded upon equity, democracy, and community empowerment aims must struggle to survive or else adapt. Hudson's leaders have chosen to adapt, but only slightly. The continued service of "starents" and founding teachers, who have demonstrated a commitment to progressive education and collaborative leadership, appear to have helped Hudson not to stray far from its founding mission.

However, as Hudson pursues its third charter renewal and opens its second school in 2020, there remains ambiguity as to what extent market tenets will be further incorporated into school leaders' approaches to garnering support for organizational survival. Furthermore, Hudson's neighborhood is becoming increasingly gentrified, as wealthy and White families relocate from more expensive parts of New York City. Shifting neighborhood demographics will likely impact consumer demand for a Hudson education, with critical implications for equitable access. Finally, in the long term, the "starents" and founding staff who remain involved in Hudson's leadership will likely retire. It remains to be seen to what extent a new, younger generation of Hudson leaders will stay true to the school's founding progressive mission given the challenges associated with doing so in a market-oriented educational environment.

Chapter 6

The Case of Liberty Charter School

"Everybody knows Success [Academy], no one knows Liberty… Knowing that you've got limited capacity and brand recognition, how can you insert yourself in this space and say, 'Hey, look. We're doing something unique and creative and new here, and, yeah, we don't have 18 schools, but the one we've got is really doing something special.'"
—Jonah Zavalla, Board Trustee, Liberty Charter School

This chapter describes how Liberty Charter School's leaders and board trustees mobilized support for the school, tracing its emergence in 2013 and its successful charter renewal in 2018. I found that Liberty had robust community support at the school's inception, as many individuals were attracted to the school's sustainability theme and commitment to racial and socioeconomic diversity. Despite early support from local families and community members, however, Liberty has continuously failed to meet its enrollment targets due to intense competition for students in the Community School District (CSD), which comprises nearly 20 traditional public and charter middle schools. Given the frozen state charter funding formula discussed in Chapter 5, Liberty also struggled financially. Under-enrollment exacerbated the school's budget challenges, limiting its share of public per-pupil funds. In response to such intense market competition for students, Liberty's leaders and Board of Trustees endeavored to build the school's brand through various marketing practices and engaged in targeted student outreach and recruitment efforts. Liberty's leaders and board also strove to advance the school's market position by adjusting its interdisciplinary, project-based pedagogical model to one that incorporated explicit test preparation, hoping that doing so would improve students' test scores and render the school more competitive with the CSD's high-performing schools. Finally, despite the challenges created by market competition, the data suggest that Liberty's survival as an organization was tied to its close affiliation with high-status networks, which lent the school critical political and financial support, in turn buffering it from competitive pressures. Together, the data on how Liberty responded to market competition reveal that the school experienced mission drift. Specifically, Liberty redefined sustainability from a communitarian notion emphasizing one's responsibility to the people and other living things in her community, to a market-centric idea focused on organizational longevity and survival in the market.

I discuss this chapter's findings in four parts. In Part I, I provide an overview of the case, describing the school's founding mission in detail and challenges to sustaining this mission in a competitive market. Part II discusses what Liberty's leaders and board trustees did, had, and knew in their efforts to advance the school's market position. This section draws particular attention to Liberty's access to affluent and high-status networks, and how these networks provided the political and financial support necessary for the school's survival. In Part III, I discuss the ways in which what Liberty's leaders and advocates did, had, and knew mirrored the practices, resources, and knowledge of market-oriented charters, and how Liberty's efforts to secure a competitive edge in the market were in conflict with the equity and democracy tenets of its founding mission, in turn causing mission drift. Finally, in Part IV, I discuss how Liberty's original sustainability goals were subverted by the market and redefined in terms of the ability to survive by mitigating against market competition.

Part I: Overview of the Case

Spotlight on the Mission: The Liberty Salad Garden

The modest lawn separating Liberty Charter School from the sidewalk was covered in raised garden beds blooming with lettuce, spinach, arugula, and kale. The lawn was surrounded by a low wrought iron fence, over which hung vertical planters bursting with herbs: basil, oregano, parsley, and dill. Tacked onto the sides of the garden beds and posted onto the fence were colorful hand-drawn signs in English and Spanish, describing each green's biological classification, global origins, growth cycle, and culinary uses. Additional signs encouraged passersby to harvest from the garden and provided illustrated instructions for how to do so: "Pick the greens you want. Make sure you leave stems for more plants to grow. Thank you for keeping the garden sustainable!"

During a presentation to the school community, four eighth grade students described, in English and Spanish, the development of the Liberty Salad Garden. They explained that their work was guided by the schoolwide "sustainability rubric," comprising five core competencies: thinking and acting strategically, incorporating multiple perspectives, engaging stakeholders, thinking systemically, and considering long-term impact. Together with their interdisciplinary writing class, they designed and built the garden, researched and developed the informational signs, and wrote an informational brochure to be distributed to community members. They also wrote a handbook for future Liberty students, describing how to maintain the garden and ensure that it effectively serves the community as a way of addressing hunger and a lack of access to healthy food. In this way, one student explained, the Liberty Salad Garden was deeply informed by the school's multi-faceted sustainability mission to "[make] things last longer." The garden addressed sustainability not only in environmental terms, but also in social and economic terms in that it contributed to ongoing community well-being.

The Liberty Salad Garden exemplified Liberty Charter School's mission to educate middle school students through interdisciplinary studies of sustainability. Indeed, in this class, students not only honed their research and writing skills, but also learned about the art, design, and science of gardening in limited space. Hands-on learning activities took place both indoors and outdoors. And aligned with Liberty's mission to nurture civic responsibility, students engaged diverse stakeholders by distributing brochures about the garden and providing bilingual gardening instructions. Moreover, they presented to and received feedback from community members, including community activists and faculty members from local colleges.

The Liberty Salad Garden was just one example of the interdisciplinary, sustainability-themed learning experiences that exemplified the school's progressive mission. In addition to taking academic classes, all students participated in an interdisciplinary "project block," such as the writing class where students developed the garden. During project blocks, students explored sustainability through various lenses, such as visual or performing arts, using the sustainability rubric to guide their work. For example, in an eighth-grade project block centered on graphic design, students worked in teams to develop prototypes of sustainable bus shelters; some prototypes featured solar panels, while another incorporated rooftop rainwater collection systems wherein water would flow into a nearby park. Another cornerstone of Liberty's experiential educational model was its meditation program, where students practiced meditation for two 15-minute periods daily as a way of developing sustainable and healthy habits.

Liberty's founding team designed the school around an interdisciplinary sustainability theme as an alternative to what they perceived as the more traditional curricula and teacher-

directed pedagogical approaches characterizing most CSD middle schools. They believed that interdisciplinary education would effectively foster students' academic as well as socioemotional and civic development, and that a hands-on, experiential educational approach would authentically animate students' love for learning. The founding team also recognized a need for more middle school seats in the CSD given growing numbers of families with young children. Finally, the founders aimed for Liberty to advance equitable opportunity and access by admitting students regardless of their elementary school performance, in contrast to the many so-called "screened" CSD middle schools that evaluate applicants based on their academic performance, attendance records, and sometimes even recommendation letters.

How did Liberty's leaders and board advance the survival of their sustainability-themed school in a saturated market where nearly 20 traditional public and charter middle schools compete for students? How did they mobilize support for their equity-oriented model in an accountability-driven educational environment that incentivizes not hands-on learning, but rather, quantitative measures of individual student achievement? In the remainder of Part I, I discuss how Liberty's central challenge of under-enrollment reinforced its financial difficulties, and how these two challenges operated in tandem to place Liberty's market position at risk.

Enrollment and Funding Challenges Constrained Mission Realization

Liberty's central challenge was meeting its enrollment targets. In advance of applying for a charter, Liberty's founding team conducted extensive outreach to gather community feedback and input, and learned that many community members shared their desire for increased middle school seats and more alternatives to existing CSD middle schools. As evidence of strong community support, Liberty's charter application noted that the founding team collected nearly 300 signatures supporting the school. Moreover, the application reprinted the following comments from a CSD parent survey: "As a parent and educator, I feel there needs to be more options for middle school in [this CSD]. I believe in the mission and support the creation of Liberty," and "[This borough] is desperately in need of more good choice for middle schools for our children. Liberty sounds just right!" Despite early community support, Liberty has remained under-enrolled since it opened in 2013. Although CSD parents initially appeared enthusiastic about Liberty's interdisciplinary curriculum and sustainability theme, interview respondents posited that many families continued to prefer middle schools demonstrating higher levels of student achievement relative to Liberty. Indeed, each year, average math and reading test scores at Liberty have been below CSD averages. Board trustee Carola Dillon explained:

> People who are within our district get top [admissions] priority, but there's so few people from our district that want to come to Liberty that we take people from outside our district… We're in a very high performing district, so why would you take your kid out of a high-performing school to put them into a medium-performing charter school?

Because most families within Liberty's CSD chose higher-performing middle schools, Liberty extended its outreach to families in adjacent CSDs. By 2018, over 60% of Liberty students traveled from 3 "feeder" CSDs outside Liberty's own. Liberty's enrollment challenges illustrate how a market-oriented educational environment frames a successful or quality school in terms of quantitative measures of student achievement (Engel, 2000).

Liberty's enrollment challenges exacerbated its financial difficulties. In remaining under-enrolled, Liberty's public per-pupil funding allocation was limited. Meanwhile, operational

expenses, such as facilities rental, were based on full enrollment. In addition, although Liberty was not a unionized school, its leaders committed to offering teachers a salary competitive with the salary schedule determined by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in order to attract high-quality staff, but doing so placed an additional strain on the school's budget. To address these funding challenges, Liberty's leaders and Board of Trustees mobilized funds through applying for government and foundation grants and making direct fundraising appeals to its community. However, Executive Director Justine Caruso perceived that most major funders were uninterested in a small, independent charter school such as Liberty. When we first met in fall 2017, Justine remarked that she had been reading *Policy Patrons*, a book by University of Michigan professor Megan Tompkins-Stange that examines the role of large philanthropic organizations in education. Justine explained that the book lent her important insight into the world of charter school funding:

> Standalone charters just don't fit in there very much… I haven't been able to find the right, I believe they're out there, but the right donor that wants to invest in a model of sustainability education, real, innovative, sustainability education, and sees us as not just a standalone charter but as serving a community.

Justine's comments reflect research demonstrating that a market-oriented education environment encourages venture philanthropists to "invest" in ventures that promise "returns" in the form of student achievement and sector growth, rather than in alternative schooling models (Scott, 2009).

Interviewees also expressed that negative public perceptions of charter schools constrained Liberty's efforts to attract prospective students and donors. Board trustee and former staff member Ricarda Epstein remarked that the widespread "monolithic" view of charter schools, reinforced by extensive public attention on the Success Academy CMO, "hurts" Liberty by obscuring its interdisciplinary curriculum and sustainability theme. Indeed, founding team member and former board trustee Francie Dyer recalled that, during initial community outreach efforts, some community groups did not support Liberty because its members were politically opposed to charter schools, "even though the missions of [those] organizations and Liberty were very linked." Dona Herr, a staffer in the office of the local Councilmember, similarly explained that some CSD families "have very strong views about charters and say, 'They're charters, we would not send out kids to a charter school, period. It just isn't for us." To address what she perceived as misperceptions about Liberty, Ricarda explained that she often "preaches on [her] own" to help people understand that "not all charters are the same" and "Success [Academy] is not the model of Liberty." However, ongoing enrollment and funding challenges suggest that these individual efforts to distinguish Liberty from Success Academy have had limited impact.

Liberty's interconnected enrollment, student achievement, and funding challenges were of particular concern among interviewees given the school's impending charter renewal, during which the state authorizer would evaluate Liberty against the performance-based accountability goals stated in its charter. To help construct a narrative that contextualized under-enrollment in terms of the competitive CSD environment and framed Liberty's modest student achievement in terms of improvement, Justine and the board hired a consultant, Laurine Diggs, to assist with preparing the renewal application. Laurine explained:

> We try to help schools look at their data in ways that will illuminate a growth spot that isn't really shown in the hard numbers. But, they can talk about… for example, students

> with disabilities are showing a lot of growth, even though, their overall proficiency levels aren't that special.

In spring 2018, Liberty's authorizer renewed the school for a 4-year term, 1 year short of the full 5-year charter term, suggesting that Laurine effectively helped Justine and the board to make a compelling case for the school's renewal. However, as I will discuss in Part II, Liberty's successful renewal likely also emerged from the political support it enjoyed from high-status and affluent networks. Indeed, research demonstrates that school closures are a political process, particularly in terms of race and class, and that schools at risk of closure disproportionately serve poor communities and communities of color who have long been politically marginalized (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016; Ewing, 2018).

Finally, interviewees spoke of their limited capacity to address the enrollment, student achievement, and funding challenges discussed above. Unlike Hudson, Liberty did not have an administrative office staffed with full-time employees devoted to instructional leadership, political advocacy, or development. Although Liberty's administrative team divided within-school operational and academic responsibilities between an Operations Director and Principal, respectively, all external-facing tasks, such as fundraising, student recruitment, and community outreach, fell on Executive Director Justine, though she occasionally hired consultants for assistance, as I discuss in Part II. Justine explained how limited capacity put Liberty at a disadvantage relative to better-resourced schools, such as CMOs:

> I have no development department… I need to just do the hands-on work of rolling out the annual appeal while also making all those connections, whether it's for fundraising or political support… Ultimately, we don't have the number of bodies that you would have in a bigger school, and certainly not the level of specialization that you would have in a [charter school] network, where you'd have a department to handle different things.

Time constraints have also affected the Board of Trustees' capacity, causing many absences among board members to monthly meetings. Three meetings in a row lacked quorum, and nearly every meeting I observed included a discussion about recruiting new board members to fill its numerous vacancies, as I discuss in Part II.

However, while CMO-affiliated schools are generally better-resourced than independent charters such as Liberty, lending CMOs a competitive edge in the market (Farrell et al., 2012), interview respondents acknowledged the advantages Liberty enjoyed as a small, independent charter school, primarily regarding autonomy. A local news article about Liberty quoted Justine's explanation of why Liberty's lack of CMO affiliation was beneficial: "We are even more responsive to our community needs and students' needs because we are not accountable to a larger system." Yet as I discuss in the following section, in response to competitive market pressures, Liberty's leaders and Board of Trustees undermined its original commitment to autonomy, as well as the progressive tenets of its founding mission.

Part II: What Liberty's Leaders and Board Did, Had, and Knew: Mobilizing Political and Financial Support in a Competitive Marketplace

What They Did

Strategic marketing and advertising: Building Liberty's brand. In light of ongoing under-enrollment and funding challenges, Liberty instituted various marketing and advertising practices centered on building its "brand." One way was by producing branded promotional materials. For example, Justine worked with a Liberty parent to produce a short promotional video about the school, which highlighted the school's sustainability programming and featured student testimonials. This video was on the home page of Liberty's website and was also distributed to potential donors during the school's year-end fundraising campaign, discussed below. In this way, the video served to market the school to both prospective applicants and donors. Liberty also produced various branded items to distribute to the community during student recruitment events, including a colorful one-page brochure, pens, and seed packets, each bearing the Liberty logo. Interestingly, the school logo, which appeared on the website, video, and all branded items, contained the word "charter" in much smaller letters compared to the words "Liberty" and "School." Moreover, the letters spelling the word "charter" appeared vertically, offset from the other words in the school's name, written horizontally. This had the effect of minimizing the word "charter" to the reader's eye, perhaps also a strategic marketing strategy designed to garner the support of individuals politically opposed to charter schools.

To assist with branding efforts, Justine and the Board of Trustees hired a financial consultant in November 2017 to help launch Liberty's social media "brand awareness campaign" to coincide with national "#GivingTuesday" efforts during the week after Thanksgiving. The campaign encouraged people not only to donate to the school, but also to post to social media photos of themselves holding signs reading "#LibertyCares about #GivingTuesday," accompanied by a caption describing why they care about Liberty. At the November board meeting, Justine announced the goal of raising $30,000 and urged board trustees to participate in the campaign and share it with their personal and professional networks. She distributed an email template for board members to send to their networks, which included a link to the promotional video described above. Justine also asked me, the sole member of the public present at this meeting, to take a group photo of her and the board trustees holding the "#LibertyCares about #GivingTuesday" signs so that they could kick-off the social media campaign immediately.

In addition to this finance consultant, several board trustees with marketing experience assisted in Liberty's marketing and brand-building efforts. These trustees included Misty Gray and Tad Sherrill, both Columbia Business School alumni and current business and finance professionals. Another board trustee, Jonah Zavalla, worked for a national CMO in the areas of student and staff recruitment, and he explained how he drew upon this experience in guiding Liberty's marketing efforts: "I definitely think some of the messaging or branding, that was a big element of [CMO] recruitment, and so I've had some conversations in the past with Justine around how to better promote Liberty and leverage Liberty's unique mission." Jonah further remarked that Liberty, as a small, independent charter school, has fewer resources relative to a CMO to devote to marketing, and thus "occupies a much smaller share of the public branding market space." Given this resource disparity, Jonah explained, an effective branding technique was to distinguish Liberty's sustainability theme, a tactic consistent with the literature on charter marketing (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Jabbar, 2015; Wilson & Carlsen, 2016).

Online marketing through Donors Choose. Similar to their counterparts at Hudson, teachers at Liberty used the Donors Choose website to fundraise for their classrooms, though, unlike at Hudson, they were not required to do so. As discussed in Chapter 5, Donors Choose allows teachers to market their schools to potential donors, similar to how websites allow schools to project a particular image in order to attract applicants (Hernández, 2016; Wilson & Carlsen, 2016). In January 2018, a Liberty teacher described the funds needed to support her English language learners:

> My students are all ESL kids, meaning they are growing up speaking one language at home, and one in school. They may have been born in another country, and their parents usually don't speak English very well, are immigrants, and usually need assistance navigating acquiring basic things like finding an apartment or reading a school email in English… It is important to keep kids excited about reading, a trip to a place you've been reading about for weeks does just that. We have been reading an informative book about the Empire State Building… The kids have been super excited to go see the actual Empire State Building, but the money just isn't in the budget.

This teacher requested about $400 to cover tickets to the Empire State Building and lunch at a nearby pizzeria. 11 donors fully funded the project in less than one month. Yet as discussed in Chapter 5, although teachers can effectively raise funds for their classrooms by acting as "grantseekers," in doing so, they participate in an unequal market system that encourages competition for resources and advantages those already possessing a competitive edge through connections to affluent networks (Freedman, 2000). The teacher's update to donors following the trip suggests that students, too, learned to play a role in this market system. She wrote, "In my classroom, students are asking, 'Where are we going next?' and 'What shall we fundraise for now?' It's wonderful to see such young people take ownership of their classroom, their experiences, and their education." Although this teacher framed students' interest in fundraising as "taking ownership" of their education, their interest also signaled their developing understandings of the market and how to compete in it.

Leveraging student achievement as a marketing strategy. Although raising student outcomes was not an explicit focus of Liberty's interdisciplinary and sustainability-themed mission, in response to competition from high-performing CSD middle schools, Liberty marketed its high school placement record as a way to attract prospective students. Seven to 10 percent of students from each of Liberty's three eighth-grade classes to date received offers from several of New York City's most selective public high schools, such as Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant. Although this represents a small share of Liberty students, the names of these high schools featured prominently on Liberty's promotional materials and its website. Interview respondents noted some increased interest in Liberty among prospective families due to this particular marketing strategy. Justine explained that parents residing in one of the CSD's disproportionately wealthy and White neighborhoods generally appear interested in Liberty's sustainability theme, but "their biggest question is, is it rigorous enough to challenge my child?" For this "kind of consumer," Justine noted, "our wonderful high school acceptance rate that is to really, really top high schools… is of course really important." Board trustee Angelo Burgess similarly remarked that families within Liberty's CSD are increasingly perceiving Liberty as a desirable middle school choice given its high school placement record: **"**There's much more attention, there's much more interest, and now Liberty is competing at a different level with the

other schools… There are more applications, which is a good sign." Although the majority of Liberty students did not receive offers to selective and specialized high schools, increased interest in Liberty among prospective families suggests that naming these schools was an effective marketing technique.

Relatedly, Justine acknowledged opportunities to leverage Liberty's student achievement record to market the school to potential donors. Before the school opened, Justine had applied for funding from the Walton Foundation, but was not successful because the school "hadn't been proven yet as a model." However, with 5 years' worth of student achievement data, Justine explained that Liberty perhaps has a better chance of receiving funds from philanthropists interested in evidence of student growth. She remarked that it is "incumbent" on her to demonstrate student achievement to potential donors: "I think we're just starting to get some of the academic returns and data that might draw attention. So, that's incumbent on us to really show that." Justine's comments reveal her perception that, through marketing student outcomes, she could successfully garner the support of major donors such as the Walton Foundation.

Targeted student outreach and recruitment. DiMartino and Jessen (2018) argue that, in addition to strategic marketing and branding, schools market themselves to potential clients through targeted outreach. Evidence suggests that Liberty's leaders and board perceived targeted outreach as necessary given intense competition in the CSD for students. For example, a Columbia Business School (CBS) student intern worked with board trustee and CBS alumna Misty Gray to analyze Liberty's student recruitment efforts and develop recommendations. As noted in board meeting minutes, the intern examined "how the school was marketing itself and the effectiveness of those efforts" and "looked at survey data and other quality indicators as compared with other competing schools and identified opportunities for improvement."

Moreover, Liberty targeted recruitment efforts toward "special populations"—students with disabilities, economically-disadvantaged students, and English language learners—to realize its mission to enroll a diverse student body. As noted in its charter renewal application:

> With a school model that is focused on the benefits of inclusion and diversity, outreach is essential to the Liberty mission. Due to Liberty's location in a district with substantial competition for middle schools, it was essential that Liberty develop a compelling outreach plan to attract as many families as possible to apply to the school.

The application also described some examples of how school leaders and board trustees have refined their outreach efforts over the course of the school's first charter term:

> Last year we added a feature to our enrollment process, asking parents to answer the question: 'How did you hear about us?' to try to assess efficacy of specific outreach efforts. We evaluate their answers to determine strategies that have been most effective. We also look at target populations such as ELLs to gauge effectiveness of those targeted outreach strategies, and identify room for improvement. The Liberty leadership team documents outreach efforts and keeps a running record of student enrollment and retention, with data organized by the three main subgroups (ED, ELL, SWD) as well as by race and home district. The Liberty Board reviews outreach and enrollment metrics, primarily using the enrollment data of its home district as a target.

Arguably, accountability pressures also compelled Liberty to document, assess, and refine its efforts to recruit special populations: in reviewing Liberty's charter renewal application, the authorizer evaluates Liberty's demographics to assess whether it matches those of the CSD.

To attract English language learners specifically, in 2017, Liberty added an admissions lottery preference for such students, as the school consistently experienced challenges enrolling a percentage of ELLs that matched that of the CSD. Yet the school's ELL enrollment, as well as its percentage of Asian students, continued to fall short of the goal to mirror CSD demographics. To address this disparity, Liberty created a new outreach coordinator position for 2019–2020. This is consistent with DiMartino and Jessen's (2018) finding that many charter schools create specialized administrative roles, including outreach, recruitment, development, and marketing directors, to promote the school in the competitive public and charter school market. Interestingly, the board also decided to eliminate Spanish language instruction in 2019–2020 to increase instructional time for reading and math, seeming not to recognize how this decision might impact their enrollment of English language learners.

Marketing as a form of staff recruitment. Finally, marketing Liberty to potential staff members was a primary concern, given a high rate of staff turnover and what Justine described as a competitive and "dry" teacher labor market, particularly for science positions. While Liberty was not unionized, the school leadership and board strove to keep teacher salaries aligned with those of the UFT, but budget constraints caused by under-enrollment and the state's frozen charter funding formula made this less possible each year. Although the state raised per-pupil funding for charter schools in spring 2018, the UFT pay-scale also increased at a similar rate. Justine commented, "Ultimately, we have to compete in a marketplace" where unionized schools and non-unionized, but well-funded, charters recruit for teachers. Thus, recognizing that Liberty could not match the salary offered by unionized schools, Justine marketed the school to potential staff by emphasizing non-tangible benefits, including professional learning communities, opportunities for teacher leadership, and a smaller workload compared to other charter schools.

What They Had

"Give and get" potential on the governing board. Although Liberty's founding board comprised many of the community members who were involved in developing the school and writing its charter application, more recently, the board recruited new members with "give and get" potential: the ability to make a financial contribution directly or facilitate "connections to deep pockets," as Justine remarked. The strategy to recruit such board trustees is consistent with Scott and Holme's (2002) observation that charters often intentionally select for their governing boards individuals with access to affluent networks. Reflecting this strategy, recent additions to the board included Tad Sherrill, a finance professional, and Misty Gray, a vice president at an organic food company recently acquired by a multinational food corporation. Both Tad and Misty were recruited through Columbia Business School's nonprofit board leadership program. In addition, Liberty's board chair, Galen Crocker, who has served on the board since its beginning, retired from a career in investment banking. At the time of data collection, additional trustees on the 8-person board included professionals in the areas of law, nonprofit management, and charter and alternative teacher education.

At three of the five board meetings I observed, board trustees discussed the need to recruit additional members with give and get potential. Moreover, during our interview, Misty Gray explained the need for current board members to leverage their personal networks to recruit such individuals: "To get these people you need to be connected with these people… you have to

look at who's on the board and who is part of that network." Misty's belief that board trustees must leverage their connections was on display at the board's January 2018 meeting, when she said that a friend of hers working at Bridgespan, a global nonprofit social impact organization, could post Liberty's board recruitment advertisement on the company's online jobs board. Misty explained that Bridgespan would require a $50 fee. Liberty's board appeared to perceive this fee to be worth the expense, as the advertisement appeared on Bridgespan's online jobs board in July 2018. In leveraging Bridgespan's broad reach, Liberty's board appeared unaware or indifferent to the fact that Bridgespan supports, and is supported by, many market-oriented education reformers whose principles are little aligned with Liberty's founding progressive mission. For instance, Bridgespan's funders include venture philanthropists supporting CMOs, such as the Gates Foundation; and it has supported alternative teacher preparation initiatives, such as an effort in Memphis to recruit and train teachers through the Relay Graduate School of Education (Doyle & Perigo, 2014).

Liberty's increased reliance on board recruitment pipelines such as Columbia Business School and Bridgespan is evidence of its response to a competitive market environment where the ability to mobilize resources is highly contingent on charters' connections to affluent networks (Scott & Holme, 2002). Yet as Scott and Holme point out, the market system enables charters with such connections to accrue more resources than charters lacking such ties. This competitive environment "[enables] some schools to maintain or create their privilege, while other schools fall even further behind," perpetuating vast resource inequities (p. 126).

Proximity to an affluent community. Scott and Holme (2002) also demonstrate that a charter school's geographic location matters greatly to its ability to access resources. They write, "Schools located in high-status communities have strong and weak ties to many resources, and are therefore able to tap easily into financial, social, and economic capital in their community" (p. 105). Liberty is located in an economically-diverse CSD comprising multiple small neighborhoods reflecting a range of income levels: neighborhoods in the northern and western portions of the CSD have median incomes of over $100,000, while neighborhoods in the southern and eastern areas have median incomes of $45,000 or less. Middle-income neighborhoods, where median incomes range from $45,000 to $65,000, are scattered throughout the CSD, mostly in its central region (New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, 2018). Liberty is located in the middle of the CSD, bordering high- and middle-income communities. Although nearly 60% of Liberty's students are classified as economically-disadvantaged, Liberty's proximity to affluent communities appeared to facilitate its access to robust levels of financial support.

For example, a few weeks after launching the #GivingTuesday appeal described above, Justine and the Board of Trustees made a second appeal, dubbed the "Granny Match," as the grandmother of an enrolled student pledged to match donations up to $5,000. In a letter to potential donors, Justine wrote:

> From now until December 31st, this "Granny Match" will match your donations dollar for dollar to reach our goal of $30,000 for our Winter Appeal. Due to our successful kick-off at Giving Tuesday (Thanks so much to those who donated!), we now only need $12,500 more. This means we need $7,500 from friends like you, thanks to our powerful Granny heavy-lifting with her $5,000 match. We can do this together!

The PTA made an additional appeal to the school community in May to raise about $13,000 through the online crowdfunding platform Ioby, which would match $5,000. A note in the family newsletter read, "A donation, whether it be $25, $50, or $250 makes an enormous difference in what the school can do… You can help us Spring into Action by helping us reach our goal by donating during this time-limited match period!" By the end of May, the PTA had successfully met its fundraising goal.

According to Liberty's 990 IRS tax form for 2016, individual contributions, gifts, and grants totaled slightly over $86,000, illustrating the robust collective ability of Liberty's community and networks to contribute. Important to note is that Executive Director Justine's parents were listed among the highest contributors, having donated $10,000. Liberty's proximity to affluent communities lent it a competitive advantage over schools located in the CSD's poorer areas, advancing its market position but reinforcing resource inequities across the CSD.

Government and foundation grants to support its sustainability niche. In addition to the private contributions discussed above, Liberty has accessed funds from government and foundation grants. Government grants were particularly critical during Liberty's first years, given the costs associated with a start-up charter school (Huerta, 2009). Justine explained that the federal Charter School Program funds, intended for brand new charter schools, were key to Liberty's ability to operate. Also critical were state stimulus funds, ranging from $50,000 to $149,000, for capital and technological improvements prior to the school's opening. Liberty also received a grant of over $100,000 for technology from the Borough President's office. Justine remarked, "There's no way we would've been able to open without that chunk of money."

In subsequent years, Liberty received far fewer large grants. Instead, Justine explained, most grants were for modest amounts from foundations interested in supporting sustainability; these grants supported projects such as the school garden. According to the school's 990 IRS tax document for 2016, five New York-area foundations awarded grants ranging from $6,000 to $15,000. However, in June 2018, Justine said she received "one federal grant that changed my life." The $200,000 grant was awarded by the New York State Education Department as part of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants authorized under Title IV of the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*, the 2015 reauthorization of *No Child Left Behind*. This grant would support Liberty's use of technology until the end of the 2018–2019 school year. Justine explained that the grant would specifically support interdisciplinary sustainability programming, a new Director of Sustainability position, and professional development on technology and project-based learning. Justine explained, "I'm excited that the government would… want to invest in our school… It's an honor." Arguably, in advancing improvements in Liberty's technology and sustainability programming, this federal grant helps the school to refine its "niche" in the charter market as a way to buffer against competition and advance its market position (Jabbar, 2015).

Unlike Hudson, Liberty did not have full-time development staff to work on grant-writing. As discussed above, grant-writing at Liberty was under Executive Director Justine's purview. Although Justine lamented her limited capacity to write grant applications, her former professional experience as an education consultant appeared to be a boon to the school's ability to attract large grants, such as the $200,000 federal award. As described on her resume, which was attached to Liberty's charter application, Justine had a decade of consulting experience providing "program and funding development" to an array of educational clients, including nonprofit and public entities. Having an experienced grant-writer at its helm is also evidence of

how Liberty likely enjoyed a resource advantage over other traditional public and charter schools in its CSD, enhancing its competitive position in the market.

Access to a "marketplace" of consultants. As Ascher et al. (2001) discuss, although school districts provide public funding to cover charters' instructional costs, they often do not extend support services to charters, such as those related to accounting and payroll. Charters affiliated with CMOs receive such supports from their home offices, but independent charters must find other ways to meet these needs (Farrell et al., 2012). At Liberty, numerous consultants provided these administrative and operational supports. For instance, several consultants supported the founding team as they developed the school and applied for its charter. More recently, the Board of Trustees enlisted a professional headhunter to assist with principal recruitment. In addition, the board hired consultants to assist with fundraising and charter renewal, as discussed above. Executive Director Justine also outsourced the school's accounting and bookkeeping to a firm that serves multiple independent charter school clients. Justine explained the value of outsourcing this work rather than hiring a full-time employee:

> What I gain from that, that I actually like about never having hired someone in-house, is that [the accountant] has got the breadth of all these different charter schools… All of his deadlines are synced up, which makes it harder on him because he's got to do everything at the same time, but he's never going to forget anything. He gets expertise in all of it. He gets some really wonderful vantage point that he can share with each of his clients. I value that. I think that's worth something.

Laurine Diggs, the consultant who assisted with Liberty's charter renewal process, similarly commented that consultants bring perspectives and expertise that school leaders and board trustees may not have. She explained, for instance, that her knowledge on Regents' positions on charter schools helps her to advise school leaders during their charter renewal process:

> Each Regent has their own personal bias or approach to charter schools. Some are… not cool with charter schools, and some are a little more amenable, some are really excited about charter schools. We have to keep track of all them. Then we can really give good advice and information to the schools we work with

Interview informants also generally agreed that consultants bring not only expertise, but also increased capacity and lower costs. Laurine explained that she has worked with numerous independent charter schools because "they don't really have the budget to add a full-time person that does what I do," unlike many CMOs, which "have a 'me' in their central office."

The Liberty leadership team and board often connected with consultants via the New York City Charter School Center. The Charter Center maintained and disseminated information on charter consultants through its "Apply Right" and "Start Right" programs for new charter schools, as well as through its website, which listed vendors and other charter school service providers. Ricarda Epstein, current Liberty board trustee and former Director of Operations, noted that the Charter Center also maintained a message board connecting all charter school operations staff, which enabled staff to share information and resources.

Charter Center staff member Graham Janssen explained that the market of charter school consultants has expanded in response to growth in the charter school sector:

> [Charter schools] are now a billion dollar, I don't want to call it an industry, but we're a billion-dollar environment because of the amount of money per-pupil as well as the amount of money in facility access, facility support, and all that, making a much more enticing opportunity. We've seen an explosion of vendors and contractors in the last 2 years, 18 months even.

Graham's comments echo the burgeoning literature on how charter schools have created an adjacent marketplace of nonprofit and for-profit firms drawn to the prospect of profiting from a booming industry (Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Jessen, 2018). Indeed, Graham remarked,

> There's a big explosion of contractors and vendors who are coming into the New York market from other markets. We've recently seen the arrival of a number of California providers, one from New Orleans; these all have very strong charter sectors of their own and [they] were kind of seeing that the New York market pays really well… The charter movement is strong in Boston, Washington DC, and increasingly in Philadelphia. So, it now makes sense, for example, for a California company to have an East Coast office. Why not New York, the biggest and richest of the markets?

Liberty's use of consultants was necessary for its organizational survival in a marketplace where CMOs generally have a competitive advantage given their capacity and resources. At the same time, schools such as Liberty presented a lucrative business opportunity to the growing marketplace of charter school consultants and contractors, who may be more interested in gaining from "the billion-dollar charter environment" than in advancing equitable education.

Affiliation with charter advocacy organizations. Time constraints limited the extent to which Liberty's leaders and board engaged directly in political advocacy and lobbying. As board trustee Galen Crocker explained, although the board endeavored to stay abreast of charter advocates' political activities, "We, as the board of the school, have not been highly active in the policy landscape. I think that's partly because we've had our hands full just getting the school up and running… We've sort of been, frankly, a bystander." Nevertheless, Liberty benefited from the efforts of the charter advocacy organizations with which it was affiliated. One such organization was the Charter Center. For example, during the school's "incubation" period, the Charter Center was among an array of organizations advocating for state funding to assist charter schools renting private facilities. In 2014, facilities funding advocates achieved a significant legislative victory, as the New York State Legislature passed a law mandating that charter schools either receive free public space or monetary assistance to rent private space. Liberty was not directly involved in the lobbying efforts that resulted in this legislation, but Justine explained that the Charter Center's advocacy made a critical difference to Liberty's budget:

> The savings that we have that you might see in the finance committee reports, that's a chunk of money that essentially came in year 1. We budgeted skimpily, not expecting any revenues, got [state rental assistance], and it allowed us to be a much more enhanced program… That's something that we've benefited from and greatly affected our students lives and was on the backs of all these people who really fought for that and did all [the] advocacy work around that.

In addition to the Charter Center, Liberty was affiliated with the Coalition of Community Charter Schools (C3S), described in Chapter 5. Several Liberty administrators and staff members attended C3S's first symposium, held in October 2017, where, during a town hall meeting, attendees unanimously voted to adopt a "manifesto" and a resolution: "Students, families, educators (and indeed the entire country) need a national, independent, democratically organized group to advocate for independently managed, financially transparent, community oriented public charter schools, as articulated in our manifesto." Justine was interviewed for a news article about C3S's symposium, which was featured on the Liberty website. She explained that this press coverage linking Liberty to C3S helped potential families to understand what distinguished the school from other charters: "They really see us as a community-based charter school and they actually would choose to send their kids here in a way that they never would at another charter school."

Finally, similar to Hudson's Principal Jolene, Justine expressed some willingness to collaborate with CMO-led advocacy efforts on shared issues, such as facilities funding and access, as collaborating would bring increased political visibility to Liberty's needs. As evidence of this willingness to collaborate, a January 2018 family newsletter included an announcement that "Liberty is a proud supporter of Advocacy Day," in which CMOs disproportionately participate, as described in Chapter 5. The newsletter announcement encouraged parents to register to attend Advocacy Day on the Charter Center's website. Yet although Liberty's State Senator held a constituent meeting, no representatives from Liberty attended. Despite Liberty's absence at Advocacy Day, Justine maintained that she was willing to collaborate with CMOs and their advocates. As an example of a potential shared advocacy issue, she explained that state rental assistance for charters does not include so-called "additional rent," such as utilities and security expenses, and "I could see myself being involved in a group" of charters advocating for the state to cover these costs.

Relationships with local elected officials. Liberty's leaders recognized that the support of local elected officials was key to its success in a competitive market. Hence, while in the process of developing the school, the founding team connected with the offices of two local City Councilmembers representing the electoral districts that overlap with Liberty's CSD. Later, when the founding team submitted the charter application, these Councilmembers, as well as the State Senator representing Liberty's electoral district, provided letters of support. More recently, one Councilmember spoke in support of Liberty during its public hearing for charter renewal; according to Justine, this Councilmember had never before spoken publicly in support of charter schools. Dona Herr, a staffer for this Councilmember, explained that, at the time of Liberty's renewal, the school had already established a strong relationship with the Councilmember's office; hence, "if they need a supportive letter to say this is a well-valued, important school to [the Councilmember's] constituents… we're happy to do that." In addition, this Councilmember advocated on behalf of Liberty in space negotiations with Liberty's co-located public schools. As board trustee Moriah Schulte explained about their ongoing conversations with this Councilmember, "I don't want to call it lobbying," but "we're on his radar, thanks to Justine."

Interview respondents noted that local elected officials appear to be drawn to Liberty's mission and see it as an asset to the community. For instance, the Borough President awarded official citations to the school rewarding its sustainability work. One Councilmember, whom Justine explained is especially supportive of the school's civic engagement mission, has spoken at each of Liberty's eighth grade graduations to date and has personally presented citizenship awards to students. Beyond the school's sustainability and civic engagement missions, according

to interviewees, Liberty's aim to enroll a racially diverse student population especially resonated with its Councilmembers. Justine remarked, "If we didn't have that mission of inclusion and diversity, I don't think we would have as much of [the Councilmembers'] support."

However, Liberty's particular geographic location may also have lent it particular political clout, allowing it to command much attention from local elected officials. As Scott and Holme (2002) point out, geographic proximity to high-status communities facilitate a charter's access not only to economic resources, but also to political resources. As I discuss above, although most of its students were economically-disadvantaged, Liberty is located in a relatively affluent area of its CSD. In addition, most of Liberty's founders, including Executive Director Justine, resided in the middle- and high-income pockets within the CSD. Arguably, then, Liberty's geographic location, coupled with the high economic status of its founders, facilitated robust political support from local elected officials.

Community support. Since its founding, Liberty benefitted from robust levels of community support, which emerged from the founders' grassroots efforts to gather input from diverse stakeholders. Indeed, evidence of community support was key to Liberty's successful charter application in 2012 and renewal in 2018. For instance, the charter application describes the founding team's outreach to immigrant-serving civic groups, community centers, arts and cultural organizations, and the Community Education Council (CEC), the elected parent body overseeing public education in the CSD. Dona Herr contrasted Liberty's community outreach efforts to the lack of such initiatives from charters such as Success Academy, which opened schools without community input. She remarked:

> When [Success Academy] was opening that school in [a neighboring CSD], they did not come to the public forum… My understanding is they did not reach out to the Councilmembers' office to speak with them. They did not reach out to the CEC to speak with them and say, 'We're bringing something to the neighborhood for your families. Let's talk about it.' That is wholly different than what Liberty has done within [this CSD]… If you want to be a community school, and you want to be treated as a community school, and you want to operate and have engagement within the community, you need to actually engage from the beginning. Liberty did that... It was on their own merit, their own ability to form those relationships and work with the community, that they have been more integrated into the community.

Francie Dyer, a member of the founding team, similarly explained how the she and her colleagues held numerous community meetings and attended local community events to share their ideas and collect community input. They received much positive feedback from the community, which was broadly attracted to the idea of a sustainability-themed, unscreened middle school.

Some attendees at these early meetings were so compelled by Liberty that they volunteered to help the founding team with additional community outreach. Francie explained that volunteers contributed an array of skills: "a graphics person, a communications person… I think they were just excited by the process, and the energy [of] Justine [was] very infectious." Board trustee and parent Angelo Burgess recalled attending some of those early meetings, which took place years before his children were middle school-aged. He explained that, as a former traditional public school teacher, he was initially skeptical of charter schools. However, the more he learned, the more he became interested in Liberty. He ultimately contributed to the founding

team's efforts by translating letters and informational materials into Spanish and connecting them with the Latinx community.

Overall, interviewees agreed that community support greatly facilitated Liberty's successful charter application and renewal. Yet Scott and Holme's (2002) research on charters in high-status communities suggests another interpretation: that the racial and socioeconomic status of Liberty's immediate neighborhood, more so than the volume of supporters, explains the school's successful charter application and renewal. As discussed above, although Liberty is located in a racially and socioeconomically diverse CSD, it is situated within a relatively affluent and White neighborhood, which likely lent disproportionate resources and political support to the school's start-up and renewal efforts.

What They Knew

Outcomes-oriented pedagogy. During Liberty's first year, the school's principal, Trista Bickford, was featured in a local news publication and was quoted as saying, "We don't do test prep as a separate area. We believe that the best test preparation is to have really engaging, meaningful work that challenges students to think critically about issues they care about." Executive Director Justine similarly remarked during one of our conversations that academic achievement and experiential learning "shouldn't be bifurcated," and "hands-on, project-based learning [and] education for sustainability is the means to academic growth." Yet evidence revealed some explicit test preparation across grades, suggesting a strong perception among Liberty's leaders that students' standardized test scores matter for attracting families in a competitive market. As discussed above, Liberty remained under-enrolled, and interviewees posited that Liberty's student achievement data, which were lower than CSD averages, dissuaded families from applying, as they opted instead for higher-performing schools. Liberty's explicit attention to raising student outcomes as a response to competitor schools is consistent with the literature demonstrating that charter leaders react to competition by instituting curricular changes aimed at lifting student achievement (Jabbar, 2015).

For example, whereas Liberty's founding pedagogical mission revolved around interdisciplinary and experiential learning focused on sustainability, curriculum maps for each grade, available for download on Liberty's website, included one 8-week reading unit focused on "Preparing for High Stakes Reading Tests" and one writing unit emphasizing "Preparing for Prompted Text-Based Writing." In addition, optional Saturday preparation sessions were held for 3 weeks prior to the state exams. Liberty's charter renewal application also described the addition of "advancement groups" beginning in 2015–2016 in response to the 2015 state test results; all students participated in a small advancement group based on their skill levels, where they received targeted instruction. The renewal application discussed additional curricular changes aimed at lifting student test performances, including increased frequency of "on-demand" writing to mimic the English language arts test, and the administration of comprehensive math exams four times per year, where questions mirrored those on the state math test. Finally, Justine and the board decided to eliminate Spanish instruction for the 2018–2019 school year in order to lengthen math and science classes, despite the fact that about one-third of Liberty's students are classified as Latino or Hispanic, mirroring the share of Latino or Hispanic students in the CSD.[5]

[5] Here, I use the racial category employed by the New York City DOE and NYSED.

In addition to these curricular changes, in the 2016–2017 school year, Liberty's Dean of Students added the use of a behavior management tool to track students' daily behavior in response to classroom management challenges that affected instruction. Students would begin each week with a score of 100. they would lose points for exhibiting various off-task or disruptive behaviors in each of their classes as well as during lunch, such as not following directions or using profane language, and gain points for demonstrating positive behaviors, such as cleaning up common areas and advocating for others. This tool was incentives-based: students with points totaling 85 or above were eligible for prizes, such as eating lunch off-campus, whereas students who scored below 85 participated in "academy," which Principal Trista emphasized is "not detention." The tool, with its focus on performance-based incentives, is rooted in market values and mirrors those commonly used at no-excuses charters, where "sweating the small stuff" is a schoolwide approach to maintaining order and keeping students focused on academic tasks, though often at the expense of cultivating their social and emotional development (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013).

Board members whom I interviewed expressed mixed views regarding the ideal balance between upholding the school's founding commitment to an interdisciplinary, sustainability-themed curriculum and making concerted efforts to improve student achievement data through explicit test preparation and incentives-based behavior management techniques. Some maintained that the school needed to focus on student outcomes, not only given persistent under-enrollment, but also given charter renewal pressures, as the state authorizer would evaluate Liberty against average student achievement data in its high-performing CSD. Others had a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of "[telling a] story of what the data look like and why it looks like it looks," as board trustee Carola Dillon explained:

> Of course, your data in your big CMOs [are] gonna look great because you're targeting and being very specific and being very narrow about what you're teaching, but if you're teaching the whole child and you're teaching about sustainability and you're teaching about being an amazing person and creating a really thoughtful democracy, your data's gonna look different, and we can tell that story as a charter, as a mom-and-pop charter.

Despite Carola's belief in the board's collective ability to "tell a story" contextualizing their achievement data, Liberty's pedagogical approach took a clear shift toward an outcomes-oriented model. This shift was a response to under-enrollment, which interviewees attributed to high-performing competitor schools in the CSD. In sum, Liberty's leaders adjusted the school's pedagogical approach as a means to advance its position in the competitive market.

Managerial expertise and knowledge of CMO strategies. Also to secure their competitive position, many charter schools strategically build their leadership and board rosters with managerial expertise under the assumption that management and business professionals are skilled at facilitating organizational efficacy (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott, 2008). Likewise, when the school began, Liberty's leadership and Board of Trustees included individuals of varied professional backgrounds, including education management, social work, and law. However, over the years, the board expanded its roster of business and finance professionals. As discussed above, such individuals were recruited partly to facilitate the school's access to resources. This shift also likely stemmed from market pressures, as large networks, led by business and finance professionals, enjoyed "market leader" status and hence set the parameters for what a legitimate

and successful charter school looks like (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010).

In addition to business, management, and finance experts, three members of the eight-member board had CMO experience. Misty Gray previously worked within the administrative unit of a CMO, Carola Dillon taught at an alternative teacher preparation program affiliated with several CMOs, and Jonah Zavalla had an administrative role in a national CMO. As described in a news article featuring Liberty, Justine and the board were intentional about recruiting board members with CMO experience and connections. The article's author discussed the advantages CMOs bring to their operations, including that "they have lots of experience launching new schools," and stated that Liberty "tries to tap into that expertise by having representatives from a couple of the large networks sit on its board." As discussed above, Jonah brought his knowledge of CMO recruitment and branding strategies to Liberty, and his contributions informed Liberty's student outreach plan and brand-building endeavors. In this way, Jonah helped his colleagues understand what CMOs do to secure and maintain competitive advantages in the charter market, and how Liberty could enact similar practices to likewise buffer against competition.

However, focusing on recruiting business, finance, and CMO experts appeared to have occurred at the expense of community representation. Indeed, whereas eight of Liberty's 11-member founding team were residents of the CSD, whose children attended CSD public schools, the more recently recruited business and CMO experts resided outside the district. As Liberty filled its board with individuals possessing the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to for the school to thrive in a competitive market, it crowded out opportunities to incorporate community perspectives in decision-making, contradicting the communitarian tenets of the school's sustainability theme. In this way, Liberty's board more closely resembled that of a CMO than of a community-based school (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002).

Part III: Evaluating Liberty's Survival Strategies

The practices, resources, and knowledge Liberty's leaders and Board of Trustees exhibited as they advanced the school's market position mirrored those of market-oriented charter schools. Indeed, Liberty's extensive marketing practices were aligned with the branding, outreach, and "ed-vertising" of market-oriented charters (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Hernández, 2016; Jabbar, 2015; Wilson & Carlsen, 2016). Moreover, similar to many CMOs, Liberty's access to affluent networks facilitated its mobilization of the financial and political resources critical for organizational survival (DeBray et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009; Scott & Holme, 2002). Finally, in incorporating outcomes-oriented pedagogy and managerial practices into its curricular and operational models, respectively, Liberty effectively adopted a market-oriented definition of what successful and high-quality schooling looks like (Engel, 2000; Golann, 2015; Trujillo, 2014). Together, the evidence of what Liberty's leaders and board did, had, and knew reveals that the school experienced mission drift. In response to competitive market dynamics, Liberty departed from its dual mission to foster interdisciplinary learning through the lens of sustainability and to advance equitable education in a CSD highly stratified by race, class, home language, and learning needs.

What Liberty Did: Extensive Marketing Practices Reinforced an Unequal System

Through its extensive marketing and branding practices, Liberty maximized its position in a competitive middle school market where nearly 20 traditional public and charter middle

schools vie for students. Interviewees noted that marketing made a difference in the school's enrollment. In particular, interviewees explained that advertising Liberty students' admission to selective high schools broadened interest especially from the CSD's affluent families. Moreover, marketing proved to be an effective strategy for mobilizing funding. Indeed, teachers received funding for their classrooms as a result of their successful marketing of the school via the Donors Choose website, and through Liberty's #GivingTuesday social media brand awareness campaign, the school raised over $17,000 in less than one month.

However, these marketing practices effectively situate Liberty in an unequal market system that encourages competition for scarce resources and advantages competitors with disproportionate capacity, skills, and resources to engage in ed-vertising (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Freedman, 2000). Furthermore, marketing expenses take away from funds that could support teaching and learning, thus undermining opportunities for students to access a quality education (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018). In these ways, Liberty's deep engagement in marketing contradicted its founding aim to advance equitable educational opportunity, and limited the resources available for the development of a quality interdisciplinary sustainability curriculum.

Finally, in building its brand, Liberty's leaders and board employed a market-based definition of education, one that commoditizes education as a private good to be consumed (Engel, 2000). Doing so conflicted with what is described in Liberty's charter application as a sustainability-themed curriculum that fosters students' "interest in their larger community and social issues" and "[develops] a sense of their rights and responsibilities as citizens." Building a recognizable Liberty brand served Liberty's self-interests to mobilize resources in a competitive market. Yet these branding efforts contradicted Liberty's founding mission to develop students' understanding of, appreciation for, and responsibility to the community beyond themselves.

What Liberty Had: Access to Affluent Networks, but Little Attention to the Broader Community

Liberty's access to affluent and high-status networks through its board and surrounding geographic community advanced its mobilization of financial and political resources. But similar to the school's marketing activities, Liberty's connections to such networks signaled its willingness to participate in an unequal market that further advantages the privileged and disadvantages schools without similar connections, causing them to fall farther behind (Scott & Holme, 2002). In neglecting to acknowledge how Liberty benefited from its connections to the affluent and high-status segments of its highly stratified CSD, Liberty's leaders and trustees missed important opportunities to consider how its resource mobilization practices effectively reinforced inequity across CSD schools. In doing so, they neglected the core tenets of the school's sustainability curriculum that emphasized one's responsibility to the broader community. Indeed, evaluated against the schoolwide sustainability rubric, discussed in Part I, Liberty's resource mobilization efforts showed minimal alignment particularly with the areas of "incorporating multiple perspectives," "engaging stakeholders," "thinking systemically," and "considering long-term impact." Ironically, however, the financial resources Liberty accrued through its affluent connections enabled the school to refine its sustainability curriculum and develop this curricular theme in order to gain a niche in the saturated middle school market.

Relatedly, in prioritizing individuals with give and get potential for its Board of Trustees, Liberty missed opportunities to incorporate community stakeholders into school governance. Although Liberty reserved a non-voting board seat for the PTA president each year, board discussions regarding trustee recruitment focused overwhelmingly on targeting those with access

to affluent networks. Such recruitment efforts appeared to have had modest payoff: during its May 2018 meeting, the board voted in favor of the addition of a new trustee, a recent Columbia Business School alumna who had previously consulted with the board on teacher recruitment efforts. This recent vote is further evidence of the board's priority to build its connections to high-status networks, to the neglect of the commitment stated in Liberty's charter application to "[engage] all corners of this disparate community."

Finally, while Liberty benefited organizationally from the growing market of charter school consultants, its participation in this marketplace arguably furthers the privatization of public education. As scholars have pointed out, many for-profit and non-profit organizations that provide technical support to schools profit from public dollars, and this process is often not transparent to the public, hence undermining democratic accountability (Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012). Liberty's continued contracts with consultants signaled its priority to advance organizational efficacy while neglecting to acknowledge how doing so affected the broader public.

What Liberty Knew: Outcomes-Oriented Pedagogy Framed Learning in Market Terms

In response to competition from high-performing schools, Liberty adjusted its interdisciplinary curriculum to make room for more explicit test preparation. In doing so, Liberty's leaders and board accepted a definition of quality schooling emphasizing not "explorations of real-world problems and challenges," as discussed in its charter application, but rather, quantitative evidence of high student achievement. Increased reliance on outcomes-oriented pedagogy also impeded curricular and instructional innovation and undermined Liberty's founders' intention to provide an alternative to the more traditional academic approaches across middle schools in the CSD. Relatedly, in eliminating Spanish instruction to extend instructional time in tested subjects, Liberty may have undermined its effort to enroll greater numbers of English language learners, hence contradicting its aim to foster an inclusive learning environment. Together, these curricular shifts illustrate Liberty's increasing resemblance to most market-oriented charter schools, which generally conform to an outcomes-oriented curriculum in order to ensure evidence of student achievement (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Lubienski, 2008; White, 2018). Arguably, Liberty's strong desire to learn from CMOs' best practices, exemplified by its recruitment of former CMO professionals to its board, contributed to these shifts. Finally, by incorporating an incentives-based behavior management tool intended to minimize distractions from learning, Liberty undermined its stated aim to "[support] the intellectual and social growth of young adolescents." Indeed, research demonstrates that such incentives-based approaches to behavior management constrain students' social and emotional development (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013; Torres & Golann, 2018).

Part IV: Looking Ahead: A Market-Oriented View of Sustainability

In spring 2018, the state charter authorizer renewed Liberty for a 4-year term, signaling that the school's efforts to secure organizational survival paid off. That Liberty was renewed despite its modest student achievement data suggests that political and financial support from high-status communities mattered as much, if not more, for its survival in the competitive market, in contrast to the market theory of action that competitive effects eliminate low-performing schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Together, the evidence on what Liberty's leaders and board did, had, and knew illustrate that they increasingly departed from their founding mission to foster authentic student learning through an interdisciplinary sustainability curriculum and to promote equitable education in the CSD. Yet as Liberty approached its second charter term, Executive Director Justine Caruso expressed much optimism:

> I'm really looking forward to that transition and having Liberty 2.0 or 3.0… I think we're ready for that. I'm looking forward to [being] a little bit mellower, taking that maturity to another level, trying to simplify things and not trying to do everything pedal to the metal, [to] very strategically live our mission a lot [more] deeply.

Yet to sustain the school through a second charter term and beyond in a competitive market, realizing Liberty's founding mission will likely not deepen, but rather continue to be a challenge, especially given the extent to which Liberty has already exhibited mission drift. Indeed, competition for students and scarce resources remains ongoing in New York City's saturated, choice-based educational market. In turn, marketing the school and building its brand will likely continue to be a priority in order for Liberty to remain competitive with the array of middle school options in its CSD. In addition, market competition will likely continue to encourage Liberty to nurture its connections to affluent networks at the expense of diverse community connections. Should Liberty continue prioritizing its high-status network to the exclusion of the broader community, it may miss an opportunity to cultivate the kind of institutional memory that has enabled Hudson to uphold its mission over 2 decades, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

As Liberty embarked on its sixth year, Justine remarked, "I don't know what that means for real sustainability, financially and otherwise. Do we have to grow, expand, to remain viable? That's the way the capitalist mind is sort of built." These comments illustrate how Justine's understanding of sustainability, which, at the school's outset, emphasized one's responsibility to the people and other living things in the community, shifted to incorporate market tenets. For Justine and the board, sustainability came to signify organizational self-interest. To be a sustainable school increasingly meant achieving longevity and survival in the competitive market through deepening the school's marketing practices, developing its brand, cultivating its access to affluent networks, orienting its curriculum around improving test performance, and perhaps pursuing school expansion. In redefining sustainability in these terms, Liberty strayed away from a vision of sustainability-themed education aligned with the progressive aims of fostering inquiry-based learning and equitable educational.

Chapter 7

The Case of Empire Charter School

"I don't believe there's anything not progressive about doing what it takes to keep the school open in order to do all the other progressive things that you want to do."
—Hans Barrios, Co-Leader, Empire Charter School

This chapter describes how Empire Charter School's co-leaders and Board of Trustees endeavored to maintain the competitive market advantages that emerged from the school's connections to affluent, high-status communities, while grappling with the recognition that doing so contradicted the equity and inclusion tenets of the school's progressive mission. Empire is located in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood where median household income increased from $60,000 in 2000 to nearly $90,000 in 2016. In addition, this neighborhood's share of White residents increased from 30% in 2000 to nearly 50% in 2016, while the neighborhood's Black population declined from 40% to 25% during the same period (New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, 2018). At the same time, Empire's broader Community School District (CSD) is far more diverse: in 2017, nearly half of CSD students were Black or African American, around 20% were Asian, 15% were White, and 15% were Hispanic or Latino.[6] When Empire opened in 2014, its co-leaders believed that locating in this CSD would facilitate the enrollment of a diverse population in terms of race, class, and learning needs. Although Empire has successfully met its enrollment target for students with special learning needs, it has not successfully achieved diversity in terms of race and class. In 2017, almost half of Empire's students were White, while only one-quarter were Black and one-quarter were economically-disadvantaged, demonstrating that Empire's students disproportionately hailed from the school's immediate neighborhood, rather than from across the CSD.

Empire's co-leaders and board recognized that a disproportionately White and affluent population was in conflict with their founding mission to facilitate inclusive education in terms of race and class. Thus, they instituted various changes to their admissions policy in order to expand Empire's enrollment of students of color and economically-disadvantaged students, including an admissions lottery preference for students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch. At the same time, Empire's co-leaders and board displayed little willingness give up the market advantages the school enjoyed by virtue of its connections to affluent and politically-powerful networks. Indeed, despite a stated commitment in Empire's charter to build a diverse governing board, the co-leaders and current board trustees disproportionately focused on recruiting affluent individuals who would facilitate the school's access to funding, a common strategy among charters seeking to advance their market position (Scott & Holme, 2002). In addition, contrary to its progressive, inquiry-based pedagogical model, Empire's co-leaders instituted explicit test-prep activities designed to improve students' standardized test scores in response to attrition from parents dissatisfied with Empire's modest test score data, which a marketized education system upholds as an indicator of school quality (Apple, 2005; Engel, 2000). Some interviewees reflected on how Empire could change course in order to realize its progressive mission. For instance, co-leader Shellie Peek noted the possibility of relocating to a less gentrified neighborhood in order to enroll a more diverse population. On the whole,

[6] Here, I use the demographic categories employed by the New York City DOE and NYSED.

however, Empire's co-leaders and board exhibited little willingness to give up some of the privileges that advanced its market position, causing the school to experience mission drift.

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the case, describing Empire's founding progressive mission and the co-leaders' and trustees' perceived threats to Empire's organizational survival in the competitive market. In Part II, I discuss what Empire's co-leaders and Board of Trustees did, had, and knew in their effort to maintain Empire's competitive advantage. Part III evaluates Empire's practices, resources, and knowledge against the school's progressive mission, illuminating how the school undermined its mission to advance equity and inclusivity by exhibiting an unwillingness to give up some of its competitive advantages. Finally, Part IV concludes with a discussion of how Empire's co-leaders and board redefined progressivism from an equity-oriented, communitarian idea steeped in democratic tenets to an insular, self-interested one aligned with market values.

Part I: Overview of the Case

Spotlight on the Mission: Community Gathering

On a chilly November morning, over 250 Empire Charter School students filed into the gymnasium, their brightly colored T-shirts, each bearing the school logo, a stark contrast to the grey autumn day. About half of the students appeared to be White, and the others were nearly split among what appeared to be Black, Latinx, and Asian students. As they settled onto the floor, sitting in a semi-circle, the gym echoed with their voices and laughter. Their chatter began to subside as a young White woman came to the front of the semicircle and began to play the guitar and sing: "Hello, kindergarten, hello. Hello, first grade, hello." Gradually, more and more children joined in the song, waving to each grade in turn. After greeting the second, third, and fourth graders, the children sang, "Hello, families, hello. Hello, visitors, hello." Once everyone had been sung to, the children waved their hands in the air, clapping silently. The weekly community gathering had officially begun.

Over the course of the 20-minute gathering, the Empire community shared with one another what they had been learning and experiencing in the past week. For instance, another White woman, accompanied by a Black male student, shared the items for sale at the student-run farm stand: rainbow carrots, golden beets, kohlrabi, chard, and apples. Then, another teacher called on five student volunteers to join her in demonstrating the F, C, and G chords on the ukulele; they played these chords to accompany their classmates as they sang Bob Marley's *Three Little Birds*. "Don't worry 'bout a thing, 'cause every little thing's gonna be all right." Later, a class of 25 students walked to the middle of the semicircle, and a White male student explained that they would teach everyone a song about enslaved people in Egypt, which was also sung by enslaved people in America. He and his classmates held up large sheets of paper printed with the song lyrics, and everyone sang: "Wade in the water. Wade in the water, children." Next, Zofia Zamora, an Empire administrator, called November birthday celebrants to the middle of the semicircle, where they were serenaded with a birthday song about walking around the sun. The community gathering ended much as it had begun, with a goodbye song.

The weekly community gathering is at the heart of Empire Charter School's progressive mission. Hans Barrios, an Empire co-leader, explained Empire's mission by describing the school's dual definition of progressive education: learning through inquiry and experience, and learning in a diverse environment inclusive of race, class, and learning needs. Notably, this definition reflects the pedagogical and political goals of progressive education dating to the early

twentieth century (Dewey, 1900/1990; Forman, 2005; Perlstein, 2002; Semel, 1999b). The community gathering was a weekly ritual where students practiced greeting, welcoming, and interacting with those different from themselves, including new families and visitors from the community. They experienced learning through music, movement, and nature. When they returned to their classrooms—each co-taught by a general education and a special education teacher—these types of experiential learning activities continued. Students practiced sight words and spelling through interactive games, and applied their math skills at the farm stand, where they inventoried and priced items.

Echoing Dewey's (1900/1900) call for schools to foster child-centered experiential learning environments, Hans explained Empire's progressive pedagogical approach as one emphasizing the learning experience rather than learning outcomes:

> I think of the brain as a sponge, and when you're memorizing five times five or reading that fact in the textbook, you're just tapping the sponge with a drop of water. But, when you're playing with five bowls of five marbles… experiencing five plus five is 10, 10 plus five is 15, seeing the components of 25, learning the multiples of five without ever hearing the word multiplication, you're giving that sponge an avalanche of water that's getting to the core of the sponge and is less likely to leave.

According to Hans, even though leaders of market-oriented charters, such as those affiliated CMOs, may claim to be progressive, their traditional curricula and test-focused, teacher-directed instructional approaches are actually regressive in emphasizing student outcomes over the learning process. He especially critiqued the New York City CMO Success Academy, whose standardized test scores are consistently among the highest among New York City public schools (Disare, 2017), though media reports suggest that Success Academy's high test scores reflect the CMO's practice of "teaching to the test" and pushing out low-performing students (Taylor, 2016). Hans commented, "[Success Academy CEO] Eva Moskowitz says her Success [Academy] is progressive, and that's a crock of shit." Shellie Peek, an Empire co-founder and co-leader, similarly explained, "I think [progressive charter schools] are often left out of the picture, but there aren't that many of us… We're way outnumbered by the back-to-basics test-prep factories," such as Success Academy, which had over 40 schools in 2017.

However, despite Shellie's perception that "test-prep factories" overshadowed Empire, I found that Empire enjoyed numerous advantages in the competitive charter school market. Although Empire's co-leaders and board trustees perceived Empire's lackluster student achievement records to put its organizational survival at risk, I argue that Empire's geographic location facilitated access to high-status and politically-powerful networks, which buffered it from accountability and competitive pressures. In the remainder of this section, I discuss the co-leaders' and board trustees' perceived threats to Empire's successful charter renewal and organizational survival.

Perceived Threats to Empire's Charter Renewal and Organizational Survival

Poor standardized test performance. In spring 2017, Empire's first third grade class took the state standardized tests in English language arts (ELA) and math. One-fifth of students scored proficient or above on ELA, and around one-third of students scored proficient or above in math. By contrast, across Empire's CSD, nearly half of all third-grade students scored proficient or above on both ELA and math. Because performance-based accountability is one

component of the charter school renewal process, Empire's co-leaders and board believed that its test scores put the school at risk of not being renewed for a full 5-year charter term, or at all. Indeed, during the board's first meeting of the 2017–2018 school year, the co-leaders and board discussed the need to focus on more effectively preparing students for the spring 2018 tests, as Empire would be up for renewal in fall 2018. Moreover, board trustee Shelton Newsome explained, "We were given very explicit feedback [from the authorizer] that those test scores need to go up or you won't be renewed. So, we're getting those test scores up." Yet between 1999 and 2016, only nine charter schools in New York State have had their charters revoked or not renewed, suggesting that performance-based accountability pressures were not as strong as Empire's leaders and board trustees perceived (New York City Charter School Center, n. d.).

In addition, Empire's co-leaders and board worried that the school's low test scores explained attrition in grades K through 2 and the fact that few waitlisted students accepted seats that opened mid-year. At the January 2018 board meeting, Hans and Shellie hypothesized that families are increasingly choosing other CSD elementary schools because, as Shellie put it, "our test scores suck." They expressed concern that under-enrollment caused by attrition would negatively impact Empire's budget by limiting its public per-pupil revenues.

To improve the school's renewal prospects and address attrition, Empire's co-leaders adjusted the school's progressive curriculum and pedagogy, incorporating explicit test preparation activities designed to improve students' test scores. These included in-class practice tests and after-school tutoring. However, some interviewees expressed mixed feelings about instituting test preparation, pointing out how doing so conflicted with Empire's progressive pedagogical model. As board trustee Otto Meeks remarked, "[Empire's] focus is on the [progressive] approach, but we're being, in a lot of ways, judged on the results… it's almost like we're being judged on a game that we're not playing, so how do you, kind of, play both games?" Recognizing the dissonance between progressive education and an outcomes-based accountability system, the co-leaders expressed a commitment not to sacrifice progressive education entirely. Speaking at a September 2017 family meeting, co-leader Shellie explained that, even with added test preparation, "We're not going to change the kind of school we are." In Part II, I discuss Empire's test preparation practices in more detail.

Financial challenges. Co-leader Shellie explained, "One of our sub-missions was, let's prove to people, let's just prove that we can run a great school on nearly all public dollars, and that's proving to be really hard, really hard." As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, New York State's frozen per-pupil funding formula caused charter school funding to lag behind that for traditional public schools. In addition, as noted above, Empire's co-leaders and board explained that student attrition further constrained Empire's public per-pupil revenues. For example, at the board's January 2018 meeting, the board's treasurer explained that enrollment had declined by 8 students, creating a revenue loss of about $90,000. The board's finance committee recommended that the co-leaders increase enrollment as soon as possible so as not to incur a budget deficit, and suggested that the board discuss a more financially efficient staffing model in light of such budget challenges. However, by June 2018, Empire's balance sheet illustrated a deficit of slightly over $45,000, an improvement over previous years' deficits, and an unrestricted cash balance of nearly $40,000. Moreover, during the June board meeting, co-leader Hans shared that the deficit was even lower than that on the balance sheet, as three families had recently donated $1,000 each. As I will discuss in Part II, Empire's affluent families and the board's professional networks greatly facilitated the school's access to funds, advancing the school's fiscal health and placing the school at a competitive advantage over charters lacking similar community ties.

Limited time and capacity. Empire was in its fourth year of operation at the time of data collection, and interview respondents expressed some improvement to their workloads since the school's earlier years. Co-leader Shellie explained, "I think, early on, we were all trying to hold up so many balls. Now… I'm finding that what I'm doing is becoming higher and higher level, which is important, I think, for a leader." Similarly, the Board of Trustees had slowly refined its structures and practices, combating some longstanding burn-out and "inertia," as board trustee Otto Meeks described. However, some of the early challenges around co-leaders' and board trustees' capacity remained. Notably, Hans explained that he and Shellie had little time to coach teachers, whose levels of experience varied. He remarked, "An absence of sufficient stewardship and description of what needs to happen in an Empire classroom... has not allowed [teachers] to find out what they need to do." Inconsistent pedagogical approaches, he believed, were reflected in Empire's lackluster test scores.

Constrained time and capacity also impeded the co-leaders' and board trustees' ability to engage in political advocacy. Shellie remarked that, although she and colleagues were interested in engaging in the charter advocacy arena, "If we let ourselves, the politics piece could be someone's full-time job, and so I think we've forced ourselves to stay out of it a little bit." Similarly, board trustees' personal and professional commitments resulted in limited political advocacy. Yet as I discuss in Part II below, limited time did not appear to constrain Empire's ability to acquire the financial and political support needed to maintain a competitive advantage in the market context. Part II also discusses the practices, resources, and knowledge Empire's co-leaders and board exhibited as they responded to the perceived challenges discussed above.

Part II: What Empire's Leaders and Board Did, Had, and Knew: Mobilizing Political and Financial Support in a Competitive Marketplace

What They Did

Selective enrollment. As discussed on Chapter 3, in response to accountability pressures in the competitive market, many charter schools engage in selective enrollment practices, such as "cream skimming" high-performing students and "cropping" low-performing ones (Jabbar, 2015; Welner, 2013). Although no evidence suggests that Empire engaged directly in such practices, the co-leaders and board trustees altered the school's enrollment policy in order to improve its test scores. The original admissions policy stated in Empire's charter application demonstrated the co-leaders' early commitment to ensuring equitable access to an Empire education through backfilling, or offering available seats to students at any point in the school year: "We will backfill any vacant seats in kindergarten through fifth grade to account for student attrition… As a public school, we feel it is our duty to offer these vacant seats to applicants in all grades." However, in spring 2018, the co-leaders and board decided no longer to backfill empty seats in the testing grades, or third grade and above. As Shellie described:

> [Backfilling] is a huge risk for us, and that's why our test scores are what they are. We're basically taking kids up through fourth grade, and we have to stop doing that because we can't turn it around, they're so far below grade level. And even though I morally believe we should be taking kids at all grade levels because we are a public school, if test scores are what are going [to] let us keep being [a] school, and we get kids in fourth grade that are 3 years below grade level, and they actually take a test before the end of the school year, how are we going to do that?

Board trustee Cassie Babb more succinctly expressed her feelings about the new admissions policy: "This feels wrong." Nevertheless, instituting a policy that puts an end to backfilling was evidence of the co-leaders' and board trustees' response to an accountability-driven market where student achievement is perceived to matter for organizational survival. When I asked Shellie if she and her colleagues had ever asked the charter authorizer to design accountability benchmarks more closely aligned with Empire's progressive pedagogy, she replied that they had not, "because we never want to seem like we're trying to opt out or cop out or something." Here, Shellie's comments that an alternative to test-based accountability would be a "cop out" suggests her acceptance of a market-based educational system that defines student' test scores as a valid measure of school quality and success (Apple, 2005; Engel, 2000).

Interview informants similarly explained that improving Empire's test scores through practices such as ending backfilling might improve attrition in the younger grades. Shellie posited that recent attrition in grades K through 2 is driven by parents' desire for their children to be in a "better" school by the time they reach the testing grades. Parent leader Celena Harwell similarly suggested that Empire's seeming lack of "results" drove some families away:

> It's harder for parents to see the results of what their kids are gaining because it's not as tangible… We do have a bit of a hard time getting parents to volunteer that aren't always the same parents. And I think a bit of it is maybe the fact that a lot of people are halfway out the door.

Celena's comments suggest that parents also generally defined school success and quality in terms of test-based student outcomes, even those who initially chose Empire for its progressive curriculum. Indeed, she continued, "There's this idea that if you're focusing on how to learn rather than learning and ingesting facts and being able to score well on standardized tests, there is going to be some deficit… and I think parents are very uncomfortable with that." That both staff and parents held an outcomes-based definition of school quality is evidence of widespread faith in an "audit culture," wherein quantitative measures of effectiveness crowd out more holistic approaches to evaluating student learning and success (Apple, 2005).

Although ending backfilling likely could have the intended effects of improving test scores and reducing attrition, this selective enrollment practice contradicted Empire's founding commitment to equity by limiting opportunities for students, particularly low-performing ones, to access an Empire education. Arguably, low-performing students may especially benefit from a progressive education that engages them through inquiry-based and experiential approaches in place of "ingesting facts," as Celena described. Moreover, in the long term, this barrier to access may contribute to public perceptions of Empire as a "prestige charter school," which Brown and Makris (2018) describe as enjoying a reputation similar to that of an elite private school. Brown and Makris demonstrate that prestige charter schools often reinforce segregation and inequity, as their reputations disproportionately attract White and affluent families and signal to poor families and families of color that they are not welcome.

Strategic marketing and advertising. As was the case at Hudson and Liberty, teachers at Empire marketed their classrooms to potential donors through the Donors Choose website. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, Donors Choose provides a platform through which teachers can craft a particular image of their classrooms in order to capture funders' attention (Wilson &

Carlsen, 2016). For example, an Empire second grade teacher fundraising for a set of iPad Minis totaling over $1,500 wrote:

> Many of my students are eager to become real-world problem solvers. Part of tackling these issues is to have technology in the classroom so that students can use both new and traditional methods to flexibly problem-solve and share their ideas with others. All of my students are curious, risk-taking learners!... This technology will support students who are growing as readers, mathematicians, coders, artists, and scientists!

Nineteen donors fully funded this teacher's request in one month, including the Gates Foundation, which matched all donations made in a single day. Similar to the Donors Choose requests at Hudson and Liberty, the rapid funding of this request is evidence of this teacher's access to a network of relatively affluent individuals (Scott & Holme, 2002). This network put Empire at a competitive advantage over schools in poor communities that do not have access to such networks, or teachers with the time or capacity to effectively engage in marketing (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2002). Moreover, in acting as "grantseekers," Empire's teachers commoditized education and demonstrated a willingness to participate in an unequal market system that does not ensure equitable resource distribution, but rather, incentivizes competition for limited resources and advantages those already enjoying relative privilege (Freedman, 2000).

Replication and expansion. Some interviewees spoke in favor of expanding Empire by adding a pre-K program and middle school grades in order to provide students with a continuous progressive educational experience. For example, board trustee Sanford Stovall recalled that his daughter experienced a difficult transition from a progressive middle school to a more academically traditional high school, and he remarked that a continuous pre-K–12 Empire would be in students' best interest. Some Empire parents shared this perspective. For instance, in a letter to the Board of Trustees, three parents of currently enrolled Empire students, whose younger children would be eligible for pre-K in the following year, wrote that early exposure to the Empire model would ease students' transition to kindergarten. They also noted the logistical advantages of keeping siblings together in a single school: "When children are together, families are able to free up time, energy and funds that are otherwise divided between the different schools that children attend."

The expressed reasons for expanding were not only pedagogical and logistical, but also market-driven: expanding Empire would help the co-leaders and board to lay claim to facilities in the competitive public school real estate market. Indeed, Department of Education officials alerted Hans and Shellie that other charter school leaders expressed interest in the available space in the building Empire currently occupies, including at least one school leader navigating the rental expense of his school's current private facility. It seemed that, should Empire choose to add a pre-K program and middle school grades, it would have priority to the available space in its building, hence fending off others vying for access.

From the board's perspective, the main disadvantage to expanding was the financial and operational burden. Thus, the board ultimately did not approve Empire's co-leaders' request to add a pre-K class in fall 2018, arguing that this timeline was too soon, but remained amenable to adding pre-K the following year. The board also decided not to add middle school grades until "far away in our future," as Hans explained.

In discussing the disadvantages to expansion, few interviewees remarked on the equity implications. One exception was board trustee Shelton Newsome, who noted that Empire's eventual pre-K program would likely change the school's relationship with neighborhood Head Start programs and other community preschools from which Empire has recruited kindergarten students. Shelton explained that, should Empire start a pre-K program, it would inevitably compete with these neighborhood preschools for students, leading these programs to "feel like we're poaching their kids." Yet in addition to stoking ill-will, pre-K at Empire would siphon public funds away from other neighborhood public pre-K programs, including those serving economically-disadvantaged children. The same funding dynamics would likely play out among neighborhood public middle schools should Empire expand into grades 6 through 8. In addition, should Empire continue not to backfill empty seats in third grade and above, an Empire middle school would likely not expand middle school access beyond those students already enrolled in its elementary school. As Empire's neighborhood continues to gentrify, possibly deepening Empire's status as a prestige charter, demand for Empire's pre-K and middle school could potentially remain highest among White and affluent families, thus reinforcing racial and socioeconomic segregation. Yet on the whole, interviewees neglected to acknowledge or consider these potential impacts of expansion on equity.

What They Had

A governing board with access to affluent donors. Similar to Hudson and Liberty, given limited state funding for charter schools due to the frozen charter funding formula, Empire sought connections to high-status and affluent networks in order to maximize its access to private funds. As discussed in previous chapters, this is a common practice among charter schools seeking to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002). At Empire, co-leader Hans, a former investment banker, leveraged his professional network to mobilize financial resources, particularly in the school's first years. Board trustee Shelton Newsome discussed Empire's funders as follows:

> At the very beginning, it was exclusively Hans's friends. Hans comes from a finance background and just had wealthier friends than either [of his co-leaders] and had a much bigger network, especially on the East Coast, and so at the very beginning, it was mostly just people affiliated with Hans.

Several individuals from Hans's professional and personal networks comprised Empire's founding board, in concert with scholarship demonstrating that charters fill their boards with affluent and high-status people as a way to acquire resources (Scott & Holme, 2002). To illustrate, on Empire's charter application, 5 out of 6 trustees were described as personal or professional connections of Hans's. In response to the prompt, "Please indicate how you became aware of the charter school and the opportunity to serve as a member of its board," the founding board chair, a lawyer and business owner, wrote "I met Hans Barrios, one of the co-founders of Empire Charter School, more than 15 years ago." Another board trustee, a Stanford MBA graduate, wrote, "For the past 6 years, I have been working in the Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group on providing financing to charter schools that serve predominantly low- and moderate-income families. During that time, I met Hans Barrios." As these examples demonstrate, Hans strategically mobilized his extensive connections to business and finance professionals to build Empire's board and, in turn, maximize the school's access to funding.

In subsequent years, similar to Hudson and Liberty, Empire extended its board's roster of affluent and well-connected individuals. For example, Shelton Newsome, a former Teach For America teacher who joined the board in 2014, described a "friend-raiser" event his parents hosted in their Manhattan apartment: "We just had a bunch of people over and gave Hans the opportunity to talk about [Empire's] mission. And we didn't explicitly ask for money, but that was certainly the subtext." According to co-leader Shellie, these types of events typically yielded about $1,000 in donations. Board trustees especially leveraged their personal wealth and networks in planning Empire's annual spring benefit gala. Illustrating the gala's centrality to Empire's annual fundraising, the event is held each year in a dedicated event venue and features live entertainment and an auction. The gala expenses, including venue rental and catering, are included each year in the school's budget and totaled over $30,000 in 2018, according to the board's financial reports. Board members were expected to disseminate the gala invitation widely across their personal and professional networks, encouraging their friends to purchase a $50 ticket or make a donation. Shelton explained:

> I send an email to 100 people… The main ask is that they come to the benefit, that they buy a ticket to the benefit, and then if they can't do that I ask obviously, if you're not gonna make it, we'd love for you to support with just a donation.

School leaders also encouraged board members to contribute high-value auction items. Hans asked specifically for items with a value of at least $500 in order to "minimize work and maximize payoff." He gave as examples overnight trips, and "not a weekend yoga class." Ultimately, donated auction items included a private baking class at a neighborhood bakery, one-week passes to a local fitness center, gift certificates to upscale restaurants, and a private round of golf at a suburban country club. Together, these contributions demonstrate the centrality of Empire's high-status board and its members' personal connections to the school's ability to remain financially afloat, limited public funding notwithstanding.

Despite these examples, co-leader Shellie explained that, from its inception, the board was not intended to be a "moneymaking board," but rather, to represent a range of expertise. Indeed, in addition to business, finance, and legal professionals, Empire's founding board included two education and child development experts, including Hans's graduate advisor at the Bank Street College of Education. Yet my observations of Empire's board meetings throughout the 2017–2018 year revealed that the board prioritized an individual's "give or get" potential when recruiting new trustees, similar to Liberty. For example, in discussing what one trustee dubbed the "value add" of a possible recruit with little experience in education or nonprofit governance, Shelton remarked, "If we bring someone like that, he needs to write us a big check."

Finally, in addition to the Board of Trustees, Empire has had a small advisory board since its founding, comprising up to six individuals each year. The advisory board has included professionals in the fields of education, law, finance, and philanthropy, and have all been, according to board trustee Otto Meeks, "high net worth" individuals. Otto explained further that he and several board colleagues aimed to engage more regularly with the advisory board, which had lately been "dormant." He described the task of "[keeping] them connected to the school, whether it's via updates, whether it's via outings, whether it's just sitting down and having lunch with them," because "these are big wigs, so we hope to access their networks from a fundraising and awareness standpoint." Otto's comments reflect research demonstrating that charters

facilitate their access to resources through strategically cultivating connections to affluent networks (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002).

A well-connected development director. Shellie described her co-leader Hans as "our network person" and "a really good schmoozer," traits that have facilitated Empire's access to affluent donors, as discussed above. As Empire's co-leader for operations and development, Hans was also responsible for mobilizing resources through foundation grants. However, unlike Roseann Street at Hudson Charter School, who worked on development full-time, Hans was responsible for numerous operational and instructional leadership tasks. Despite this demanding workload, Hans effectively secured some foundation funding for Empire, although similar to Hudson and Liberty, these grants tended to be restricted for particular purposes rather than sustaining endowments. For instance, an ongoing source of grant funding since the school opened was a local neighborhood foundation that supports educational and community initiatives. This foundation consistently made unrestricted grants over around $10,000 each year until 2017, when it awarded the school over $20,000 for the development and implementation of a gender and sexual identity curriculum. At the September 2017 board meeting, Hans noted the power of cultivating positive relationships with foundations, as the $20,000 award emerged from a conversation he had with foundation officers during their annual tour of the school.

In addition to this source of support, Empire has had some success securing smaller grants for specific curricular programs. Hans explained that he often enlists the assistance of teachers and parents to apply for such grants, such as through the Donors Choose website, as discussed above. Yet as I also note above and in previous chapters, teachers' participation in grantseeking enmeshes them in a market system that reinforces inequity through encouraging competition among differently-advantaged schools (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Freedman, 2000).

Although teachers' grantseeking activities undermined Empire's equity mission, Hans's rejection of grants from venture philanthropies was evidence of his deep commitment to this mission. For example, Hans commented that Empire "could have easily gotten" a grant from the Walton Foundation during the school's first years, but he and his co-leaders ultimately decided not to apply for this grant for political reasons:

> If we had taken that money, $250 grand, over the first 3 years, there's a number of things we could have done. We could've had one more person at a senior level, pay them $80 grand a year to be an Assistant Principal just to take some shit off our plate. We could've hired two more school aides which would have also taken shit off our plate because we ended up not doing our jobs in supporting all the kids who came in needing more support… [But] we just feel like we didn't agree with how [Walton] made the money… I imagined a particular student who is now in fourth grade, who I find to be especially thoughtful and well-read. If she had come to me and said, 'Hans, why do we take Walton money?' I wouldn't have been able to look her in the eye.

Hans's remarks demonstrate how the school's equity mission informed the decision not to apply for funds that would have advanced the school's ability to serve its students well. The Walton family made its fortune through the commercial retail chain Wal-Mart, notorious for exploiting its workers and paying them less than a living wage (Van Buren, 2016). In Hans's mind, taking money from such an organization would be inconsistent with Empire's mission to welcome, support, and nurture children from historically underserved communities. In declining the

opportunity to apply for funding from the Walton Foundation, Hans adhered to Empire's founding progressive mission, despite the school's existence in a competitive market that encourages competition for limited private resources.

Affluent and engaged parents lending financial support. As discussed above, Empire is located in a CSD comprising several rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods, and the school's resource mobilization efforts benefit greatly from the school's geographic proximity to increasingly affluent and high-status communities. This is in concert with research demonstrating that charters' geographic locations matter for their access to funding (Lubienski et al., 2009; Scott & Holme, 2002). According to the Board of Trustees' financial reports, each year to date has generated slightly over $100,000 in donations and fundraising. Evidence suggests that in addition to the Board of Trustees, Empire's White, affluent, and professional parents drove the school's fundraising efforts. In addition, some such parents contributed their professional skills to fundraising initiatives. For instance, one mother, a professional photographer, took students' school pictures free of charge, and proceeds from all photo sales went directly to the school.

Although Empire's affluent and White parents contributed robustly to expanding the school's coffers, the nature of their fundraising events served to undermine the school's equity and inclusion goals. To illustrate, Empire's parent volunteer organization, whose leadership committee was nearly entirely White, organizes an annual ticketed, adults-only evening party featuring music, DJs, and a raffle. Each year, this event "attracted more of the wealthier families," explained Moises Stark, a White parent and co-president of the parent organization. This unintentional exclusion of Empire's poor families mirrors research demonstrating how middle-class and affluent parents' volunteerism can simultaneously benefit the school while exacerbating inequity (Posey-Maddox, 2014). The school's co-leaders, uncomfortable with how the event excluded Empire's already underrepresented poor families, proposed cancelling it, but Moises and other parents pushed back and committed to making the event more affordable and welcoming. In doing so, parents shifted the event's priority from fundraising to community-building. According to Moises:

> We moved it to a bar in [another neighborhood] because people thought it was a little more central to where a lot of families lived, [so] it might seem more welcoming. We lowered the ticket price a lot. We worked aggressively to connect with more diverse entertainers from our community… And definitely, in our sort of, marketing for it, we worked even harder to be represented as a diverse and welcoming event.

The issue of inclusivity also surfaced regarding a much smaller-scale fundraising event: a pizza party for students and families at a Chuck E. Cheese restaurant, which offered to donate a portion of sales to Empire. Moises explained:

> We had a lot of parents who thought Chuck E. Cheese was terrible. I think it's strange to be there. It's very expensive in a lot of ways. You can't go and spend less than 20 to 40 dollars buying games for the kids if you want them to have fun. And then, they serve a lot of junk food. It's, you know, French fries and pizza and soda, nothing particularly healthy. And then you get these tickets to win these really crappy plastic prizes.

Moises's co-president, Celena Harwell, also White, agreed that most White parents opposed this event: "I'm just going to call them the White parents, [they] were like, 'Oh my god, Chuck E.

Cheese is so horrible.'" Yet both Moises and Celena acknowledged that this event, unlike others, attracted a broad racial mix of Empire families. Moises remarked, "There's something about it that's a safe space and was able to attract a lot of different families that might not come to a parent mixer that we throw at a bar or something like that."

These examples highlight the challenges and tensions that arise when disproportionately affluent and White parents have the time and capacity to organize fundraising events and, in doing so, draw primarily upon their own values, preferences, and perspectives (Posey-Maddox, 2014). As Posey-Maddox argues, although deep engagement from affluent parent volunteers can benefit a school, their work often also marginalizes poor families and deepens inequity. Moreover, as Scott and Holme (2002) demonstrate, access to affluent networks, such as those of engaged parents, enables a school to acquire further advantages while schools without such resources fall farther behind, hence deepening inequities across schools. Thus, although Empire's involved parent leaders bolstered the school's fundraising capacity, their efforts effectively exacerbated inequitable schooling across the CSD, undermining Empire's progressive mission.

High-status parents lending political support. Similar to Liberty, interviewees described Empire's extensive community outreach prior to submitting the charter application. Indeed, Empire's charter application included nearly 30 pages of evidence of the co-leaders' outreach, including communications to civic organizations, town hall announcements, and email exchanges with interested families. Yet evidence also suggests that, since it began, Empire, similar to Liberty, benefited particularly from the political support of its high-status community members, discussed above. For example, over 30 staff members and parents, some accompanied by their children, attended Empire's October 2018 charter renewal hearing; all but five appeared to be White. Notably, of the 14 adults and two children who offered public comment supporting the school's renewal, four praised Empire's diversity. For instance, a White parent praised the co-leaders' stewardship of Empire's inclusivity mission, explaining how she and other parents wanted more after-school enrichment activities, but Hans denied this request until such a program could be free for all students. Given research demonstrating that schools serving students of color are at greatest risk of closure (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2016; Ewing, 2018), Empire's supportive White parent community suggests that the school will be approved for a second charter term in spring 2019, its modest student outcomes notwithstanding.

Importantly, interviewees reflected on how strong support from White and affluent community members benefits Empire financially and politically while also undermining its mission to foster equity and inclusivity, particularly as gentrification intensifies. Shellie explained, for instance, that the school's annual spring carnival was well-attended by neighborhood families, including many not enrolled at Empire, but, "Was that visible to the population we need to be visible to? No. Not necessarily." She continued, "I feel like we're very clicked into the demographic that's already clicked in to us, which is not necessarily White, but usually White. Families that don't qualify for free and reduced lunch, and that live right around here," rather than across the racially- and socioeconomically-stratified CSD. Board trustee Stanton Herrmann similarly acknowledged the challenge of reaching poor families and families of color in light of increasing interest from a growing neighborhood population of wealthy and White families: "So the original mission of making sure that [Empire] was designed for, would reach a lot of kids who typically would not get this type of education, that's harder and harder when you've got a neighborhood that's going through such changes."

As White and affluent newcomers lent strong support, some Black and poor families in the CSD held negative perceptions of Empire, according to board trustee Sanford Stovall, a

Black man who grew up in and now manages maintenance and tenant relations at a public housing complex within the CSD. Sanford assisted with Empire's early community outreach, connecting the school's co-leaders with local civic and religious leaders. Despite the Empire co-leaders' extensive outreach efforts, Sanford described some common perceptions among Black community members: "I'm only telling you what people saying, but it's like, 'All these White people are here,' and I'm like, 'What do you mean?' and they're like, 'Yeah, they're just taking over everything,' and that's how people feel." Sanford's comments reflect Brown and Makris's (2018) findings that gentrification facilitates the popularity of certain charter schools among White and affluent families, in turn lending such schools a veneer of prestige that reinforces widespread perceptions that poor students and students of color do not belong.

Support from local elected officials and charter authorization staff. Similar to their counterparts at Liberty, Empire's co-leaders and board trustees have had little time and capacity to engage in the political arena, given the demands tied to daily school operations. However, they prioritized developing some key political relationships since the school's founding. For example, the co-leaders invited to the school their City Councilmembers and New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña. According to co-leader Hans, the Chancellor's early support of Empire was instrumental, as she helped to put the school on the "radar" of MaryEllen Elia, New York State Commissioner of Education, who then granted Empire permission to institute a lottery preference for students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. More recently, City Councilmembers, DOE officials, and City Hall officials had conversations with the Empire co-leaders regarding facilities access, a key concern among many charter leaders given the competitive public school real estate market. At the time of data collection, Empire occupied one floor of a building shared with two traditional public schools, one of which had experienced declining enrollment for several years. Co-leader Shellie Peek shared that Chancellor Fariña helped the co-leaders to connect with the appropriate DOE officials in order to discuss the possibility of expanding and occupying additional space within its current facility. As discussed above, one DOE official alerted Hans to other charter school leaders who expressed interest in the unoccupied space. Empire's co-leaders also had conversations with City Councilmembers and City Hall officials about the possibility of eventually relocating to another, less gentrified CSD to more effectively meet their racial and socioeconomic diversity goal.

In addition to the elected and appointed officials described above, co-leaders Hans and Shellie perceived much positive support from New York State charter authorization staff. Indeed, Hans described the director of the authorizing office, Basil Greenfield, as a personal friend who previously worked at the New York City Charter School Center and assisted Empire during its start-up years. Shellie similarly explained that their liaison at the authorizing office, Krysta Hooper, "values what we're doing… She's been a huge advocate and even has off-the-record conversations with me about her thoughts about pre-K or about this or about that. And that's been really helpful." Yet in my interview with Basil, he explained that his office is "pretty short staffed":

> We have a small budget [and] I wish we could do more… Including myself, we have 12 FTEs [full-time employees]… Although I have 12 people, the challenge is always getting the right people on the bus… Most people working [in this office] don't have charter school experience. That's a lot of the work that I do here, trying to get our staff to be on the same page regarding supporting innovative programming.

Despite their office's limited capacity, Basil and Krysta nevertheless appeared to make particular efforts to support Empire, further evidence of a political connection that advantaged the school's survival prospects in an accountability-driven charter market despite its modest test scores.

What They Knew

Outcomes-oriented pedagogy. As discussed above, perceiving low test scores as negatively impacting student retention and possibly putting the school's renewal at risk, Empire's co-leaders adjusted its progressive curriculum in order to improve students' test scores. This pattern mirrors research demonstrating that charter leaders respond to accountability pressures by instituting curricular and pedagogical changes intended to improve students' test performance (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Jabbar, 2015; White, 2018). As at Liberty, Empire's teachers added explicit units on test preparation, offered after-school tutoring, assigned practice test questions for homework, and administered practice tests. In addition, the Board of Trustees more regularly reviewed student achievement data from the practice tests, effectively exerting increased accountability pressures on the co-leaders. Some interviewees expressed discomfort with explicit test-prep, yet acknowledged their potential to improve student outcomes and, in turn, retain families. Interviewees also perceived improved scores as necessary for successful charter renewal, although, as discussed above, support from White families and the authorizing office appeared to boost Empire's renewal prospects. Board trustee Shelton Newsome explained, "I think this [test prep] is a necessary evil. It's awful. I wish we had a better metric. But… to just allow ourselves to continue to have a school, we need to do really well on these tests."

Test preparation activities occurred in third grade and above, as these were the grades tested annually. However, school leaders remarked on the need for test preparation to start in the younger grades, by "exposing" students to sample test questions. Hans explained:

> I think in first and second grade… we need to teach the foundational blocks to multi-step questions. Not just teach multiplication, division, those foundational blocks, but the idea that a question can have four steps should be absolute fact to these kids in second grade… You just expose them to some test questions. Just to the experience. In homework, some of the homework is a series of test questions. Just so they experience it. You expose them to a full test in the middle of second grade.

However, increasing instructional time for test preparation will necessarily cut into the inquiry-based, project-oriented learning model described in Empire's charter: "Students at all grade levels will engage in meaningful inquiry-based interdisciplinary projects." Yet interviewees expressed a willingness to put some of the progressive mission aside for the "pragmatic" purpose of achieving higher test scores. As co-leader Shellie remarked, "I think I'm pretty pragmatic in those moments. Yeah, I would love for our kids to be outside in nature 90 percent of the time. At the end of the day… they need to learn X, Y, and Z. It's our job to do that." Co-leader Hans had a slightly different perspective, explaining that explicit test preparation did not necessary contradict Empire's progressive mission: "I don't believe there's anything not progressive about doing what it takes to keep the school open in order to do all the other progressive things that you want to do."

Finally, similar to Hudson, accountability pressures compelled Empire's co-leaders to discourage participation in the growing movement to "opt out" of standardized testing. As Shellie explained:

> We've said to [parents], 'We need [your child] to take the test'… It impacts us. It impacts whether we're here… I would literally go to someone's house and knock on their door if they were trying to get everyone to opt out. Like, 'No, you don't understand the consequences. That could be really detrimental.'

Shellie's comments illustrate how perceived accountability pressures compelled her to limit the forms of civic engagement encouraged among students and families. Indeed, although the school generally supported activism and social justice learning, as evidenced by students' participation in the national March for Our Lives, Empire's co-leaders discouraged activism around the opt-out movement, perceiving the stakes to be too high.

Managerial expertise. The charter renewal process in particular appeared to have ignited the push for Empire to transition from a founding board to a more professional board, with concrete expertise and skills in education, fundraising, and nonprofit management. This is in concert with research demonstrating that charters strategically select board members with managerial, legal, or financial expertise in order to foster effective organizational management and resource acquisition (Scott & Holme, 2002). According to charter school consultant Laurine Diggs, charter board trustees are often "passionate" about education, but "lack knowledge" of charter school law and policy: "What is the authorizer looking for, what are the requirements we need to meet to stay open or expand?" In addition, Shelton shared his belief that Empire's board was often disorganized: "I think sometimes there's not enough clarity internally on what is a board decision and what's a school leader decision, so sometimes that will cause, not negative friction, just people aren't sure." Perceiving that their minimal charter expertise and disorganized state put the school's renewal prospects at risk, the board prioritized recruiting individuals knowledgeable about charter school and nonprofit management, in addition to those with affluent networks, as discussed above.

Empire's board recruited two additional trustees in 2018: Dirk Washburn, a finance industry professional, and Cassie Babb, who had prior professional experience at a CMO and a charter authorizers' association. Cassie in particular brought a noticeable efficiency to board meetings, which she began attending in January 2018. For example, Cassie gave co-leaders Shellie and Hans specific instructions to bring a pre-K expansion plan and timeline to the board for approval in November or December 2018. Shellie and Hans thanked her for the clear directive, explaining that previous board discussions around pre-K had been frustrating because there had been no clarity about when the board would be ready or willing to discuss a potential pre-K plan.

Cassie's proactive nature was a stark contrast to the disorganization and general lack of efficiency I had observed during prior meetings. For example, during board recruitment discussions in fall 2017, trustees expressed frustration that they seemed to have the same conversation every year with few changes to the board recruitment pipeline. And one board meeting conversation revolved around term lengths, as numerous board trustees seemed unclear on how long they were expected to serve. Cassie's contributions demonstrated how she facilitated the board's professionalization goal.

Consultant Laurine Diggs also helped the board to increase its level of professionalization as part of her overall work of preparing Empire for its renewal. For instance, Laurine developed various tools for the board to use to document and evaluate academic, demographic, and financial data. Board trustee Shelton Newsome explained that Laurine's "data dashboards"

increased the board's capacity to oversee the school more directly and hold its co-leaders accountable, in contrast to the board's longstanding "reactive" stance: "We would literally spend the [meeting] hour just letting [the co-leaders] talk and be a sounding board for the different things they're dealing with."

The examples above demonstrate how added managerial expertise and data management tools improved the board's efficiency and ability to hold the school accountable to its performance goals. However, these examples also illustrate Empire's departure from the equity and inclusion tenets of the school's progressive mission. For example, the addition of Dirk and Cassie to the board highlights that the board trustees and co-leaders prioritized financial and managerial expertise over community representation on its governing board. Sanford Stovall and Otto Meeks, both longtime residents of Empire's neighborhood, continued to serve as the board's sole connections to the local community; although Sanford participated often in school events and assisted with student recruitment, Otto admitted to lacking the time to do meaningful community engagement work. Yet rather than supporting Sanford and Otto's community outreach efforts, Empire chose to increase the board's managerial capacity. Notably, Empire's charter application describes a commitment to adding parent representatives to the board: "Once the school opens the Board will seek to elect two parents/guardians who reside in [the CSD] and whose child attends or has attended Empire." However, to date, no parent representatives have served, illustrating a missed opportunity for Empire to fulfill its equity and inclusion mission.

Relatedly, as I discuss in Chapter 6, it is important to consider the equity implications of the overall charter consultant market. According to the board's financial documents, the school paid Laurine $20,000 in 2017–2018. However, as DiMartino and Jessen (2018) illustrate, consultant and contractor fees are funds that could otherwise support teaching and learning. In addition, scholars demonstrate that the market of public school contractors and consultants largely operates without public transparency even though their earnings come from taxpayer dollars (Burch, 2009). Thus, in contrast to the communitarian aims of Empire's progressive mission, participating in the charter consultant market situates Empire in a system that neglects to prioritize democratic accountability (DiMartino & Scott, 2012).

Part III: Evaluating Empire's Survival Strategies

Despite the co-leaders' and board trustees' perceptions that Empire's standardized test scores, finances, and limited capacity put the school's organizational survival at risk, evidence suggests that Empire benefited from its extensive resources, notably, an affluent community that provided robust levels of financial resources and political support. Such support effectively secured the school's competitive position in the charter market. Indeed, in June 2018, with less than two weeks remaining in the school year, co-leader Shellie remarked, "Things are really looking good for us" in terms of renewal, based on positive feedback from Basil Greenfield and Krysta Hooper at the New York State charter authorizer's office. Although Empire's test scores were below CSD averages, the school's fiscal health, political support, and professional board appeared to have facilitated Empire's renewal prospects. Indeed, since its inception, Empire benefited from co-leader Hans's extensive professional network in the finance industry, allowing the school to maintain strong fiscal health despite limited public funding for charter schools. In subsequent years, additional trustees to the board further expanded the school's access to private wealth and managerial expertise. Relatedly, Empire's active parent volunteer group, disproportionately comprising White and affluent newcomers to the neighborhood, contributed

not only financially through their extensive fundraising events, but also politically, lending support to the school's renewal effort. Political support also came from local elected officials and the New York State charter authorizer's office, despite their staff's limited capacity. Even while enjoying these advantages, Empire's co-leaders and board aimed to further the school's position in the competitive and accountability-driven charter market by incorporating market-oriented practices and knowledge, namely, ending its backfilling policy in order to limit the school's number of low-performing students, and adding test-preparation activities in order to improve students' test scores. Although the co-leaders and board trustees expressed some hesitation regarding the new admissions policy and curricular design, their willingness to institute them is evidence of their priority to advance Empire's market position even when doing so contradicted the equity and inclusion tenets of the school's progressive mission. It is evidence, too, of Empire's mission drift.

What Empire Did: Contradictory Admissions Policies Undermined Equitable Access

Empire's co-leaders and board trustees recognized that the school's students skewed White and affluent, contradicting the school's founding aim to foster diversity and inclusion. In response, they made several changes to the lottery admissions process to increase the school's share of poor students and students of color, such as adding a lottery preference for students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and setting aside 40% of kindergarten seats for economically-disadvantaged students. In addition, Hans and Shellie hired additional outreach staff for the purpose of recruiting higher numbers of poor students, and they discussed with local elected officials the possibility of relocating to a less gentrified neighborhood in order to increase racial and socioeconomic diversity. Arguably, however, these efforts to achieve diversity were undermined by another recent change to Empire's admissions policy wherein the school no longer backfills available seats in grades 3 and up. As discussed above, students who previously transferred to Empire mid-year tended to perform far below their grade levels; hence, Empire's co-leaders and board perceived that backfilling would hurt the school's standardized test data. Yet in ending its backfilling policy, Empire neglected to adhere to the equity and inclusion aspects of its progressive mission. In this way, Empire engaged in a selective enrollment strategy common among charters responding to accountability and competitive market pressures (Jabbar, 2015; Welner, 2013).

Furthermore, Empire's efforts to diversify its student body were in tension with the notion that demand from White families increased the school's legitimacy in the eyes of wealthy funders, who also tended to be White. As Hans explained, "Every time someone drops private school to come to us, I make a big deal about it… When people say, 'I'm coming to Empire instead, and I've already paid the deposit to Packer Collegiate, I'm like, 'Yes, that is as big of a complement as you can possibly get from that community.'" He continued, "The person, potential funder, I want them to think about where they chose to send their kids and the fact that the kids in the projects never have that option. And, the belief that true equity will be achieved when kids in the projects are taught to think as critically as the White kids." Yet, somewhat paradoxically, Hans's approach to raising money to provide a progressive Empire education to "kids in the projects" involved maintaining demand from White and affluent families and "making a big deal" of this demand. This approach has broader equity implications, potentially signaling, to donors and others, that Empire's affluent and White families are more valued than poor families and families of color. Such signaling may reinforce public perceptions of Empire as a prestige charter that serves White and affluent families, but where poor students and students

of color are less welcome, if at all (Brown & Makris, 2018). Brown and Makris further argue that the popularity of prestige charters operates alongside gentrification, as White and wealthy families often reject the local public schools in favor of prestige charters, thus reinforcing school segregation even when such schools "claim concerted efforts to create and foster diversity," as Empire did (p. 86)

What Empire Had: Extensive Access to Resources Undermined Equity and Community Responsibility

Similar to Liberty, Empire leveraged its ties to affluent and high-status networks to mobilize robust levels of financial and political support for the school. However, also similar to Liberty, in continually cultivating relationships with wealthy communities and benefiting from their contributions, Empire effectively perpetuated an unequal market system that advantages privileged schools and exacerbates already existing resource inequities across communities (Scott & Holme, 2002). Although the co-leaders sometimes mitigated against exclusionary practices such as expensive parent fundraisers and fee-based after-school programs, their efforts to foster equity and inclusion were undermined by the board's ongoing efforts to recruit wealthy individuals with "give and get" potential while neglecting to incorporate representation from less affluent community members or those with deep local knowledge of the community's families and children. In this way, Empire's approach to building its board resembled that of CMOs, including Success Academy, of which co-leaders Hans and Shellie held deep critiques, as discussed in Part I (Quinn et al., 2016; Scott & Holme, 2002).

Moreover, in failing to address how its resource advantages affected equity across the landscape of public schooling in the CSD and New York City more broadly, Empire also lost sight of the communitarian aspect of its founding mission. As described in Chapter 4, prior to founding Empire, the school's co-leaders visited over 40 public schools across the country to learn from diverse educators. In Empire's charter application, the co-leaders expressed their intent to continue collaborating with other schools: "We are fully committed to making every effort to share the successful practices we implement in our school with neighboring schools in the community, and will work to create professional development partnerships in which our teachers and the teachers from other schools in the district can share with each other." However, belying the communitarian spirit implicit in its stated commitment to collaboration, Empire's efforts to secure financial and political resources further advantaged it over schools without similarly affluent networks, hence reinforcing inequity across the community.

Important to note is that Empire endeavored to foster community responsibility among students through various curricular and extra-curricular activities. For instance, as discussed in Part I, students operated a neighborhood farm stand and donated leftover produce to a local soup kitchen. In addition, Empire operated a "Community Closet," providing household items for families in need. Beyond the local community, Empire's co-leaders encouraged student participation in "marching for peace," as Hans explained, following the March 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida. However, these efforts to nurture students' communitarian capacities contrasted with the lack of attention among Empire's co-leaders and board trustees to how they participated in a competitive market system where privileged schools enjoy disproportionate access to resources, thus widening the resource gap across poor and affluent communities.

Finally, similar to Liberty, Empire had the resources to pay a consultant to assist with its charter renewal application and, by extension, developing the board's capacity. Yet Empire's co-

leaders and board neglected to consider how contracting with a consultant enmeshed the school within efforts to advance educational privatization, wherein private firms profit from public taxpayer dollars, often in ways obscured from public view or accountability (Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Scott, 2012). This, too, is evidence of how Empire prioritized its own organizational interests and neglected to consider how its actions undermined its stated commitment to community responsibility.

What Empire Knew: Outcomes-Oriented Pedagogy Undermined Progressivism and Choice

In Part I, I discussed co-leader Hans Barrios described his ideal math lesson, wherein students play with five bowls, each containing five marbles, in order to "experience" multiplication. This description was in concert with the educational philosophy described in Empire's charter application: "Children are innately curious and seek to understand the world around them through authentic engagement with their environment and the people in their community." Yet in another conversation, Hans expressed frustration that such math experiences did not translate to success on the state standardized tests "because of how poorly we've exposed them to testing, how poorly we've prepared them to just understand their basic math facts." Perceiving poor test scores to drive attrition and, in turn, funding, as well as the school's renewal prospects, Empire's co-leaders adjusted its inquiry-based curriculum to incorporate targeted exposure to testing and test-related content, such as "basic math facts." However, in doing so, Empire departed from a philosophy emphasizing the learning process to one emphasizing learning outcomes, contradicting Hans's definition of progressive education. Instead, Empire's instructional approach resembled a market-oriented one, defining student success in terms of narrow quantitative measures (Apple, 2005; Engel, 2000), an approach that researchers argue does little to nurture students' curiosities (Golann, 2015; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Researchers have demonstrated how institutional pressures compel schools to conform to "commonsense" understandings of what quality schools do in terms of structure and practice (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). In a market context, the broader public views schools as legitimate if their structures and practices produce high test scores, thus driving charters to give up their innovative approaches for more traditional ones emphasizing learning outcomes more so than the learning process (Huerta & d'Entremont, 2010; Lubienski, 2008). Aligned with these patterns captured in the literature, Empire's adoption of outcomes-oriented pedagogical approaches caused it to more closely resemble what most market-oriented charter schools do. Although Empire continued to adhere to numerous aspects of its founding progressive pedagogical model, including co-taught classrooms and regular art and music classes, the incorporation of explicit test preparation activities undermined the goal stated in its charter application to provide an education that is "unique in the educational landscape in [this CSD]." In other words, as its pedagogy became more outcomes-oriented and less progressive, Empire was providing less choice, not more, for families within its CSD.

Part IV: Looking Ahead: "We're Doing Nothing That We Said We Were About"

That Empire's practices, resources, and knowledge contradicted its progressive mission was not lost on co-leader Hans, who explained, "We're doing nothing that we said we were about… We're not learning from others… We're just so caught up in trying to do what we're responsible for well." Hans's comments demonstrate that a competitive market environment does

not encourage the equity and inclusion tenets of Empire's progressive mission, but rather, fosters an environment wherein educators are "so caught up" in self-preservation that they attend solely to their own schools' organizational interests. Despite recognizing how the market context in which Empire exists encourages practices that contradict the school's progressive mission, Empire's leaders and board trustees exhibited a strong willingness to behave in market terms, furthering its own organizational advantages at the expense of equity and the common good.

Scholars have argued that market values are in tension with democratic tenets, as the market incentivizes the advancement of one's own interests, while democratic values promote collective participation toward common objectives (Duggan, 2003; Engel, 2000). The case of Empire Charter School demonstrates the tension inherent in realizing the progressive, democratic aims of advancing equitable and inclusive education and practicing community responsibility in a market context that defines success in terms of individual achievement and encourages competition for limited resources. Although Empire began in 2014 already enjoying robust levels of financial and political resources, its co-leaders and board trustees endeavored to further the school's market position, missing an opportunity to realize its progressive mission through broad community-minded efforts, such as, for instance, collaborating with neighboring schools to advocate for policies that would equalize school funding or facilitate racial integration. Rejecting Walton Foundation grant funding was a notable example of how Empire's co-leaders adopted an expansive community-oriented definition of progressive education, yet this appeared to be an exception. On the whole, in neglecting to realize progressive education in such a manner, Empire's co-leaders and Board of Trustees defined progressive schooling in insular, rather than collective, terms, shaping it to what was congruent with market values rather than aligning it with democratic tenets.

Empire's co-leaders and Board of Trustees submitted its charter renewal application to the state authorizer in fall 2018. If the school is reauthorized for a second charter term, Empire will have an opportunity to reverse the mission drift it experienced during its first term. However, given the ongoing ubiquity of market forces, choosing a more expansive, democratic definition of progressive education will require Empire to give up the advantages that have facilitated its organizational survival to date.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Toward a Progressive Charter School Policy Agenda

"The only remaining hope for charter school reform to have any lasting positive impact on the public educational system would be for more progressive members of this diverse and complex movement to recapture the language and symbols of what constitutes a good charter school law. Until that happens, the hopes and dreams of the thousands of social justice educators and families engaged in this reform will be marginalized and reliant on powerful and private market agents who have never served the most disadvantaged students well."
—Amy Stuart Wells (2002), *Where Charter School Policy Fails: The Problems of Accountability and Equity*, p. 180

This study demonstrated the challenges associated with instituting progressive education in a market context, given the tensions between progressive tenets and market values. Although Hudson, Liberty, and Empire were each founded to advance the pedagogical and political aims of progressive schooling, their existence within a market context that encourages organizational advancement and survival compelled each school to compromise their founding missions to varying degrees. In doing so, each school framed equitable, inclusive, and democratic education in terms of what the market context encouraged. For instance, particularly at Liberty and Empire, equitable education increasingly meant teacher-led direct instruction designed to maximize students' performance on standardized tests. At Hudson, inclusive education involved opening a second school in response to a long student waitlist, though doing so will potentially deepen market competition and, in turn, inequitable access among students. At Empire, despite attempting to foster inclusion by instituting lottery preferences for economically-disadvantaged students, school leaders also undermined inclusion by ending the school's backfilling policy in response to perceived accountability pressures. Finally, across all three schools, efforts to cultivate affluent and politically-powerful networks resulted in a narrow approach to democratic community engagement.

At the same time, to varying extents, each school maintained some aspects of a progressive education. These included regular art classes, a gender identity curriculum, and community service projects at Empire; interdisciplinary project blocks at Liberty; and community service activities and the annual project-based learning week at Hudson. However, in primarily attending to their own organizational survival, each school neglected to realize a more expansive definition of progressive education, one tied to a broader agenda to advance positive societal change (Perlstein, 2002). Rather, each school approached admissions, resource acquisition, community engagement, and board trustee recruitment with an eye toward self-preservation in the competitive market. These protectionist behaviors situated each school in an unequal market system that commoditizes education, encourages competition for limited resources, and rewards those already enjoying relative privilege, hence deepening inequity across schools. In exhibiting a stronger willingness to advance their positions in the unequal market environment, rather than collaborate with other schools and stakeholders to advance a progressive educational and social policy agenda, Empire, Liberty, and Hudson each missed opportunities to achieve the fullest expression of their progressive missions.

In this chapter, Part I synthesizes key findings across the cases to illuminate the nature of mission drift. In Part II, I explain how this study's findings illustrate a market-based "grammar

of schooling" that organizes schools' internal pedagogical and external political practices according to the logic of the market. Then, Part III highlights some promising examples of how Hudson, Liberty, and Empire pushed back against the grammar of schooling and endeavored to mitigate against mission drift to fulfill their progressive goals. Finally, in Part IV, I discuss implications for research, policy, and practice.

Part I: The Nature of Mission Drift

This study's conceptual framework, capturing what charter schools do, have, and know, enabled an investigation of the nature and extent of mission drift as schools simultaneously endeavored to institute their progressive missions and ensure organizational survival. As I discussed in Chapter 3, at the outset of this study, I hypothesized that, should the focal charters exhibit practices, resources, and knowledge similar to those of market-oriented charters, this would suggest mission drift, or a retreat from their founding progressive goals. In this section, I discuss three main types of mission drift across schools: in pedagogy, enrollment practices, and community engagement.

Pedagogy: Drifting Away from Progressive Practices Toward Outcomes-Oriented Ones

A market-oriented system of public schooling frames student and school success in terms of narrow quantitative measures of student achievement (Apple, 2005). In response to perceived market pressures, this study's focal schools likewise came to frame education in market terms, signaling their acceptance an "audit culture" that upholds quantitative data as a valid indicator of efficacy (Apple, 2005). At Empire and Liberty, for example, leaders responded to perceived accountability pressures by incorporating outcomes-oriented pedagogical practices into their progressive curricula in order to improve student performance on standardized tests. This took the form of explicit test preparation both within regular classroom instructional time and during after-school tutoring sessions. At Liberty, school leaders also introduced an incentives-based behavior management tool in order to minimize behavioral distractions from learning, a practice common across no-excuses charters (Golann, 2015). However, researchers have demonstrated that outcomes-oriented practices constrain students' civic, social, and emotional development (Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013; Torres & Golann, 2018). In this way, then, these pedagogical practices undermined the child-centered, inquiry-based, and experiential approaches to learning that were cornerstones to these schools' founding missions, as well as foundational to Dewey's (1900/1990) notion of progressive education.

Although Hudson exhibited little explicit test prep, its co-leaders, like their counterparts at Empire, strongly discouraged student activism around the movement to opt out of standardized tests, despite their professed commitment to nurturing students' civic development and social activism. Hudson's discouragement of such activism stands in contrast to Dewey's (1900/1990) vision of progressive education as a vehicle for developing students' habits and skills as democratic citizens. Notably, Hudson's administration supported other forms of student activism and civic engagement, such performing community service, participating in the March for Our Lives against gun violence, and reaching out to elected officials to discuss gun control. Yet Hudson's selective encouragement of students' civic engagement suggests that school leaders only supported such activities insofar as they did not impact the data deemed critical to the school's "success" in the market context. A similarly limited approach to civic engagement occurred at Empire, where co-leader Shellie viewed opt-out as potentially "detrimental" to the

school. In these ways, Hudson, Empire, and Liberty drifted away from a more expansive definition of progressive education toward one that adhered to a narrow, market-oriented notion of student achievement and school success.

Enrollment: Drifting Away from Equity Toward Reinforcing Inequitable Access

Each school in this study faced distinct levels of demand from families, or as the educational market defines them, "consumers" (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). In turn, each school responded differently to such demand. However, the ways in which they did so were similar in drifting away from equitable student enrollment practices toward ones that reinforced inequitable access across an already stratified and unequal educational market. For example, Liberty went to great lengths to build its brand in response to under-enrollment, producing marketing materials, launching a social media brand awareness campaign, and consulting with marketing experts in order to compete with more visible schools. While such marketing efforts had the intended effect of boosting application and enrollment rates, they also revealed Liberty's regard for families as consumers in the education market. Empire and Hudson did not engage in similar school branding practices, likely because they experienced an abundance of demand for limited seats, obviating the need to market their schools to families. However, these schools also addressed enrollment and admissions in market terms, drifting away from an equity orientation.

At Empire, for example, even as the school instituted policies intended to diversify its student population, these policies coincided with the contradictory decision to end backfilling, or offering available seats to students mid-year. The co-leaders and board feared that backfilling put Empire's test scores at risk, as mid-year transfer students tended to be low-performing. In this way, the decision to end backfilling is evidence of an exclusionary enrollment policy in response to perceived accountability pressures in the competitive market. Finally, at Hudson, excessive demand, as evidenced by a waitlist of over 3,000 students, motivated the decision to expand, and a second school is tentatively scheduled to open in 2019. While ostensibly meeting demonstrated community preferences and demand, a second school also meets Hudson's own organizational interests. Indeed, replicating Hudson enables the school to capture a larger share of the competitive charter market and achieve greater operational and financial efficiency, similar to a CMO (Farrell et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). In prioritizing their organizational interests to survive more so than fostering equitable educational access across their communities, Liberty, Empire, and Hudson neglected to enact a form of progressive education that ties schooling to a broader effort to realize positive social change (Forman, 2005; Perlstein, 2002).

Community Engagement: Drifting Away from Diverse Local Ties Toward High-Status Networks and Managerial Governance

Across all three schools, leaders and board trustees drifted away from their founding aims to operate as community-based schools. Despite stating on their charter applications their goals to cultivate ties with community stakeholders, foster opportunities for stakeholder participation in school governance, and collaborate with other local schools, each school departed from these aims to various degrees. Instead, school leaders and board trustees demonstrated their priority to mobilize political and financial resources through expanding their high-status and affluent networks, missing important opportunities to deepen local community engagement.

At Empire and Liberty in particular, access to such networks emerged from geographic proximity to wealthy and disproportionately White communities, aligned with research demonstrating how charters' geographic location matters for their access to resources (Scott &

Holme, 2002). These schools' affluent parent communities appeared to provide robust financial support, as evident in Liberty's $5,000 "Granny Match" campaign and Empire's extensive parent-led fundraising efforts. In addition, all three schools endeavored to build the "give and get" potential of its governing board. At Hudson, this took the form of recruiting an alumnus in the finance industry, Freddie Seiler, to serve on the boards of both schools and the Friends of Hudson board. Meanwhile, Empire and Liberty leveraged their professional networks to recruit numerous wealthy board trustees. Finally, teachers at all three school successfully raised funds for classroom supplies in a short amount of time through the Donors Choose website, evidence that they enjoyed access to well-resourced personal and professional networks (Freedman, 2000).

Limited state charter school funding, spurred on by the frozen charter school funding formula, created budgetary challenges that motivated the fundraising efforts discussed above. However, especially at Liberty and Empire, evidence suggests that access to affluent networks mitigated against any critical budget constraints. In this way, Liberty and Empire enjoyed competitive advantages in an unequal market system that forces schools to compete for limited resources (Freedman, 2000; Lipman, 2011; Scott & Holme, 2002). In leveraging their affluent networks to further their own resource advantages, Liberty and Empire contributed to ongoing resource inequities across schools. Indeed, as Scott and Holme (2002) demonstrate, in a competitive market system, as some schools use their privilege to get ahead, less-resourced schools fall even farther behind. Yet school leaders and board trustees appeared not to acknowledge how their own access to affluent networks constrained the ability of schools without such access to garner sufficient resources. In contributing to broader resource inequities and neglecting to address how their privileges affected the wider community, these schools undermined the equity and communitarian dimensions of their progressive missions.

In addition, recognizing the many assets business and finance executives would bring to their governing boards, Hudson, Liberty, and Empire each recruited individuals with managerial expertise and capacity, similar to CMOs (Quinn et al., 2016). This pattern was especially prevalent at Liberty and Empire. For example, Liberty's newest trustees were primarily business and finance professionals recruited from Columbia Business School, or educators at a CMO or CMO-affiliated alternative teacher preparation program. This shift in board composition illustrates Liberty's departure from community representation toward managerialism. Empire more explicitly prioritized a professional board from the outset. To this end, the majority of school's founding board comprised co-leader Hans Barrio's connections from the finance industry, and the two trustees added in 2018 included a finance professional and a former CMO administrator. In prioritizing managerial capacity over community ties, Liberty and Empire missed an opportunity to fulfill the communitarian dimension of progressive education. Hudson came closest to realizing this aspect of progressivism in maintaining multiple venues for broad stakeholder participation in school governance. Hudson's deeper communitarian orientation is likely due to the fact that the school matured prior to the widespread managerialism of public education spurred on in New York by the Bloomberg Administration (DiMartino & Scott, 2012; Lewis, 2013). Yet as Hudson evolves toward a networked charter model, the extent to which it maintains robust stakeholder involvement or expands its managerial capacity remains to be seen.

Part II: Promising Practices for Advancing Progressive Charter Schooling

Even as they exhibited mission drift, each school demonstrated some promising practices for realizing their progressive goals. These included recruiting and retaining experienced and

mission-aligned teachers, and collaborating with other progressive charters to advance shared policy goals. However, particularly regarding the latter practice, schools still fell short of achieving a truly progressive policy agenda.

Recruiting and Retaining Experienced, Qualified, and Mission-Aligned Teachers

As discussed in Chapter 3, common resources held among market-oriented charter schools are partnerships with alternative teacher and leader preparation programs, such as Teach For America (TFA) and the Relay Graduate School of Education. Such programs ensure a steady pipeline of teachers, especially as market-oriented charters pursue expansion, as well as lend robust levels of political support to a market-oriented charter school agenda (Kretchmar et al., 2014; Trujillo et al., 2017). In contrast, Empire and Hudson did not recruit teachers and staff from such programs, prioritizing instead the recruitment of experienced, traditionally-certified, and highly-qualified teachers with master's degrees, even though such teachers are more expensive to hire than those prepared through alternative programs. At Empire and Hudson, co-leaders explained paying close attention to teacher candidates' alignment with their school's progressive mission. For example, at Empire, many teachers held degrees from Bank Street College of Education, a private graduate program oriented around progressive philosophies, or had prior teaching experience at private progressive elementary schools. Empire co-leader Shellie Peek explained that, in hiring new teachers, she and Hans attend closely to whether candidates' definitions of progressive education aligned with their own: "We listen for assumptions for what they may think progressive education is."

At Hudson, as discussed in Chapter 5, many teachers and staff have served on the teaching or administrative staff for a decade or more, and some, including Principal Jolene Agee, began their tenure as parent volunteers in the 1990s. Jolene explained, "I tend to only try to hire certified people," and critiqued the brief training period of programs such as TFA: "Would you just have lawyers take 30 hours of training?" Similar to Shellie, Jolene explained that she looks to hire teachers who fit with Hudson's progressive pedagogical and organizational models: "We want people who sort of step out of the box, definitely want people who appreciate having more autonomy in their practice." In prioritizing teachers demonstrating a commitment to and prior experience in progressive education, Empire and Hudson rejected a market-oriented view that defined quality teachers and leaders as those possessing strong managerial competencies (Trujillo et al., 2017).

In contrast to Empire and Hudson, Liberty experienced a high rate of teacher turnover during its early years, which Executive Director Justine Caruso partly attributed to the school's reliance on "inexperienced TFA kids." To mitigate against turnover, she and the board discussed strategies for recruiting more qualified and experienced teachers and enlisted a Columbia Business School student to assess the school's approaches to teacher recruitment and retention and provide recommendations. Notably, in preparation for the departure of Liberty's founding principal Trista Bickford, who planned to pursue doctoral studies, Liberty's board hired a professional headhunter to conduct a nationwide principal search. Although they did not ultimately find a suitable candidate, and instead installed the Assistant Principal to the post of Interim Principal for the 2018–2019 school year, enlisting the assistance of a headhunter was evidence of Liberty's commitment to hiring an experienced and mission-aligned school leader rather than turning to the robust pipeline of leaders produced by alternative leadership preparation programs.

Cross-Charter Collaboration to Advance Shared Progressive Goals

As noted above, each of this study's focal schools, to varying degrees, collaborated with other charters sharing similar commitments to progressive goals. For example, Empire and Liberty were each affiliated with the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition, though their involvement was minimal and Empire's leaders had some reservations about Success Academy's membership in this group. Among this study's focal schools, Hudson displayed the highest levels of collaboration with other charter schools to advance collective aims. Indeed, with assistance from a federal dissemination grant, Hudson shared best practices with a traditional public school regarding college preparation and access for historically underserved students. Hudson's leaders also maintained close relationships with their counterparts at the other two unionized conversion charter schools in New York City. This collaboration was critical for collectively advocating for public investments that would fully support the financial constraints confronting unionized charter schools. With the assistance of lobbyist Tanner Stack, these schools together achieved key political victories in spring 2018, when the State Legislature provided appropriations funding to be shared among the three schools, and City Hall included funding for unionized conversion charters in its 2018 budget. Moreover, as described in Chapter 5, Hudson's Principal Jolene Agee was a skilled political operative, and the City and State funding is evidence of how she effectively applied her political skills toward advancing the political interests of not only Hudson, but all three conversion charter schools.

However, important to note are the implications of this collaborative effort for equity across the broader charter school terrain. Each of these three schools had the resources to pay Tanner Stack; Hudson's 990 IRS form for 2016 revealed that lobbying expenses totaled $25,000. While the City and State appropriations funding was evidence of the power of the three schools' collective political advocacy, it was also evidence of how this political victory came at a steep price. Having the resources to hire Tanner put Hudson and its counterparts at a political advantage over less well-resourced schools, with the effect of deepening political and financial inequities across the wider charter school system.

The Coalition for Community Charter Schools (C3S), with which Hudson, Liberty, and Empire were each affiliated, similarly fostered collaboration among independent, community-based charter schools to advance shared political interests. As discussed in Chapter 1, C3S held its first annual symposium in October 2017, which convened independent charter schools across the country to engage in dialogue and strategic planning. C3S also hosted Tanner and three colleagues at its January 2018 meeting, where they shared political advocacy and community engagement strategies with about 30 independent charter school leaders. A few months later, in spring 2018, C3S hired Tanner to lobby on behalf of its member schools for increased state funding for charters.

However, even as C3S endeavored to advance independent, community-based charter schools as "part of a time-honored tradition of civil society working to advance the public good," as discussed on its website, the organization also exhibited a willingness to collaborate with larger and more visible CMO-affiliated charter advocacy organizations, including those aligned with a market-oriented charter policy agenda (Coalition of Community Charter Schools, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 5, C3S launched a national organization, the Coalition of Public Independent Charter Schools (CPICS), in spring 2018. CPICS has developed a relationship with the National Association for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), which supports a market-oriented approach to charter schooling. For instance, as discussed on its website, NAPCS defines as a "model" charter school law one that allows for unrestricted charter growth by not capping the

number of charter schools and allowing multi-school charter contracts and governing boards (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2018).

Relatedly, Liberty and Hudson each displayed a willingness to affiliate with CMO-led advocacy efforts, such as the annual Charter School Advocacy Day. As interviewees explained, these events, and the politically-powerful organizations that sponsored them, lent robust visibility and political awareness to issues such as state charter school funding, a concern for each of this study's focal schools. Given their limited resources, capacity, and visibility, affiliating with such groups enabled Liberty and Hudson to save on advocacy expenses while still potentially reaping the benefits of any legislative victories. Yet as progressive independent charters such as Hudson, Empire, and Liberty continue to affiliate with organizations tied to a market-oriented charter policy agenda, including C3S, these schools should remain vigilant of how doing so may potentially constrain the advancement of a progressive charter school agenda. Indeed, although all charter schools share some political interests, such as state funding, some joint advocacy efforts may ultimately obscure the progressive aims of the charter movement.

Part III: A Neoliberal Grammar of Schooling

The mission drift exhibited across Hudson, Liberty, and Empire is evidence of a market-driven grammar of schooling that organizes what charters do, have, and know. This illustrates an extension of what Tyack and Tobin (1994) describe as the grammar of schooling: "the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction" (p. 454). As examples of such organizational structures and rules, Tyack and Tobin highlight the practices of separating students into distinct grade levels and assigning credits, dubbed "Carnegie units," to high school courses based on hours of instructional time. These practices emerged around the turn of the twentieth century and, despite some experimentation with alternative practices over the years, continue to comprise what it means to be a school. To explain the stability of these practices, Tyack and Tobin illustrate how both the graded school and the Carnegie unit emerged within politically favorable conditions and with the support of politically influential reformers. In turn, both practices enjoyed widespread acceptance at their inception, and such acceptance continued to endure. In contrast, Tyack and Tobin explain, reformers who attempted to institute alternatives to the basic grammar of schooling, including some progressive pedagogical practices, have been largely unsuccessful given their minimal political savvy and influence. In addition, over time, reformers experienced much "turnover and burnout" as they sought to enact new ideas, and teachers, too, were reluctant to learn new organizational routines or convince students and families of their value (p. 478). The graded school and Carnegie unit were familiar, and therefore, easier to institute and maintain.

Whereas Tyack and Tobin define the grammar of schooling as comprising instructional routines and structures, this study suggests a neoliberal grammar that shapes not only schools' instructional practices, but also their approaches to student enrollment, political and financial resource mobilization, and community engagement. Indeed, as data from the case study charter schools illustrate, a market context that defines student achievement in terms of narrow quantitative measures, encourages competition for scarce resources and high-performing students, and upholds managerial expertise compels schools to drift away from their progressive missions and incorporate neoliberal tenets. Tyack and Tobin illustrate how progressive instructional practices, such as student-directed learning plans and ungraded classrooms, failed to take hold given the enduring instructional grammar of schooling. Extending their argument, this

study demonstrates how the progressive pedagogical *and* political possibilities of charter schooling are constrained by a neoliberal grammar of schooling that commoditizes public education, defines success in terms of test scores, and ultimately reinforces inequitable educational access.

Similar to how favorable political conditions and politically powerful reformers enabled instructional routines such as the graded school and Carnegie unit to become ubiquitous, a neoliberal political context and politically influential networks supporting market-based reforms lend legitimacy to the neoliberal grammar of schooling. Indeed, as scholars have illustrated, the expansion of market-oriented charters far outpaces that of charters oriented around progressive tenets, largely due to the political influence of reformers and advocates subscribing to neoliberal ideology (DeBray et al., 2014; Scott, 2009; Wells, 2002). In addition, as I discuss in Chapter 2, dating to the 1960s, education policies have increasingly oriented around the logic of market fundamentalism, often to the exclusion of politically progressive policies that would foster child-centered learning, equitable resource distribution, and racial integration (Rooks, 2018; Scott & Holme, 2016). Indeed, it was beginning in the 1960s that New York City's Dalton School, once a national model of progressive pedagogy, began to incorporate teacher-directed instruction and a college-preparatory curriculum, in response to the rise of political conservatism and, on the heels of the 1957 Sputnik launch, widespread perceptions that American public schools lacked academic rigor (Semel, 1999a). Hence, the political conditions that facilitated the neoliberal grammar of schooling were the same ones that supported what Tyack and Tobin (1994) identifies as the instructional grammar of schooling.

Although this study focused on charter schools, I argue that the neoliberal grammar of schooling extends across the institution of public education. Indeed, the policies, political conditions, and political actors that encourage charters to adopt market-oriented practices also impact traditional public schools. For example, the high-stakes accountability regime ushered in by the 2001 *No Child Left Behind* Act continues to shape instructional policy and practices across school types and contexts, compelling traditional public schools to cut arts and science education and encouraging teachers to "teach to the test" (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Trujillo, 2014; Vasquez Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2005). Widespread faith in managerial approaches to public school improvement continues to shape state and district reforms, limiting opportunities for communities to democratically govern their schools (Henig, 2010; Morel, 2018; Wong & Shen, 2003). School choice systems continue to expand, particularly across urban school districts; researchers have documented how such systems encourage both charter and traditional public schools to compete for students and hence perpetuate inequitable educational access (e.g., Corcoran & Baker-Smith, 2015; Mader et al., 2018). As politically powerful networks of neoliberal reformers and policymakers continue to support market-based educational policies, schools will likely continue to push aside the progressive pedagogical and political goals of public schooling.

Part IV: Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Despite evidence supporting the existence of a stable grammar of schooling, Tyack and Tobin (1994) maintain that, under certain conditions, the grammar can be meaningfully challenged:

> Cultural constructions of schoolings have changed over time and can change again. To do this deliberately would require intense and continual public dialogue about the ends and means of schooling, including reexamination of cultural assumptions about what a "real school" is and what sort of improved schooling could realize new aspirations. Shared beliefs could energize a broad social movement to remake the schools… This would require not only questioning what is taken for granted but also preserving what is valuable in existing practice. (p. 478)

Achieving a more progressive charter school policy agenda would require undoing the neoliberal grammar of schooling and challenging widespread regard for market tenets as "commonsense." Doing so would necessitate broad support for a progressive political agenda oriented around racial equity, economic security, and democracy, much as the progressive educational movements of the 1960s and 1970s were situated within larger political movements for social change (Forman, 2005; Perlstein, 2002). A deep ideological shift from neoliberalism to progressivism will be gradual, but, as I discuss in Chapter 1, evidence of burgeoning progressive politics in New York suggests that a shift may be underway. Against this backdrop, I offer the following recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

Recommendations for Policy: Advancing Equitable, Inclusive, and Democratic Education

Charter school policies centered on progressive tenets, rather than libertarian and neoliberal market values, would greatly facilitate the survival of progressive charter schools such as Hudson, Liberty, and Empire, and lend critical political support to their equity-oriented missions. Progressive charter policies would mitigate against the need for charters to exhibit market-oriented practices, resources, and knowledge, as a progressive policy context would eliminate the competitive market dynamics that encourage schools to advance their own self-interests.

Equitable enrollment and admissions policies. Progressive charter school policies would include those that prevent selective enrollment practices by requiring charters to backfill all available seats mid-year, hence maximizing equitable educational opportunity and access. Relatedly, progressive policies would require that charters enroll a diverse population in terms of race, class, home language, and learning needs. Particularly in locales such as New York City, where CSDs cover relatively large geographic areas that are highly stratified by race and class, progressive charter policies would provide free transportation for students in order to facilitate inclusive and integrated schools. Similarly, progressive charter admissions policies would ensure that charter school application information is widely and equitably distributed in order to mitigate against targeted student recruitment efforts that may facilitate access for some while limiting access for others. Together, such admissions and enrollment policies would buffer against segregation and prevent a divide between prestige charters enrolling primarily White and affluent children, and those deemed less prestigious by virtue of their enrolling primarily poor students and students of color (Brown & Makris, 2018).

Policies that ensure equitable resource distribution. The cases of Hudson, Liberty, and Empire illustrate the inequities that result from the combination of constrained public funding for charter schools as well as a market environment that encourages competition for limited public and private funding (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; Freedman, 2000; Scott & Holme, 2002). Indeed, Hudson, Liberty, and Empire, to various degrees, enjoyed numerous financial resource advantages given their connections to affluent and high-status networks, allowing these schools

to get ahead while less-resourced schools fell farther behind. Hence, a progressive charter school policy agenda would ensure equitable resource distribution, targeting resources specifically to schools in poor communities, hence eliminating steep competition for scarce resources from private funders (Wells, 2002). Resources include high-quality and experienced teachers, who are costlier than novice ones. Thus, a progressive charter policy agenda would ensure sufficient funding for charters to compensate qualified and experienced staff.

Policies that ensure public transparency and accountability. Relatedly, as DiMartino and Jessen (2018) argue, marketing and contractor fees often take away from funds that could support teaching and learning. Policies that ensure equitable resource distribution would obviate the need for charters to contract services to the private sector, allowing them instead to devote resources to developing and instituting progressive curricula and programming. Moreover, as researchers have demonstrated, public taxpayer dollars largely support marketing and contracting expenses, yet without any mechanisms for ensuring public transparency or accountability. This in turn undermines the collective responsibility dimension of progressive education (Burch, 2009; DiMartino & Jessen, 2018; DiMartino & Scott, 2012). Hence, progressive charter school policies would ensure public transparency of all charters' expenses and enact meaningful public accountability mechanisms.

Policies that ensure equitable facilities assignment. Hudson and Liberty in particular were compelled to fundraise heavily given their rental expenses: at Liberty, for its current facility, and at Hudson, for its anticipated second campus. New York City in particular is a competitive charter school facilities environment, given limited public space and the high rental expenses of private buildings. Charters are forced to rent a private facility if there is no available public space in their home CSD. In light of such limited public space, Department of Education staffer Nikia Spear shared in an interview that her office often considers various factors in assigning new charters to public facilities. These include an assessment of whether the new charter would meet CSD needs in terms of grade levels and educational programs, as well as any evidence of the charter's prior student achievement. Because only existing charters have such student data, new independent charters are automatically at a disadvantage. Hence, a progressive and equitable charter school policy would eliminate any consideration of student achievement data, and make fully transparent available public spaces and how charters are assigned to them.

Policies that ensure transparent, flexible, and community-determined accountability measures. Finally, a progressive charter school policy agenda would ensure transparency regarding how charter schools are evaluated for renewal, specifically, the extent to which charters are held accountable to their performance goals. As discussed in prior chapters, charter leaders and board trustees largely perceived successful renewal to be contingent upon students' standardized test scores; these perceptions drove them to compromise their progressive pedagogical missions by incorporating explicit test-preparation activities. Yet between 1999 and 2016, only nine charter schools in New York State have had their charters revoked or not renewed, suggesting that performance-based accountability pressures are not as strong as charter leaders perceived (New York City Charter School Center, n. d.). Transparency regarding the extent to which test scores matter to charter schools' survival would potentially eliminate the accountability pressures that compelled charter leaders to undermine their progressive curricula. In addition, progressive charter school policies would incorporate flexible measures of student performance into the charter renewal process, ensuring that the accountability system is fully aligned with the school's pedagogical approach. As Wells (2002) argues, a flexible accountability system could also encourage diverse community stakeholders to collectively

determine "the very purpose of their schooling," in turn fulfilling the communitarian and democratic aims of progressive education (p. 179).

Recommendations for Practice: Mobilizing a Progressive Charter Policy Agenda

In order for such policies to come to fruition, progressive charter school advocates must mobilize and counter the political power of robust market-oriented charter advocacy networks comprising foundations and other intermediary organizations (DeBray et al., 2014; McGuinn, 2012; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009). As the literature on civic capacity demonstrates, the most effective political coalitions incorporate a range of diverse stakeholders committed to a shared policy agenda (Stone, 2001). Similarly, Warren (2011) demonstrates how community organizing can be an effective strategy for building a diverse and equitable political coalition supporting progressive educational reforms. A progressive charter school coalition would involve not only educators and families, but also other stakeholders, such as civic and religious leaders and social service professionals, committed to seeing the charter schools in their communities equitably serve all youth. An effective coalition would also commit to full community inclusion in terms of race, class, gender, and home language (Gold et al., 2007; Henig et al., 1999; Orr, 1999). Given the limited political advocacy capacities of new charter schools, such as Liberty and Empire, coalitions could lend critical support to school leaders and governing boards with little time to engage directly in political advocacy.

Relatedly, on the school level, charter leaders should encourage the political participation of its staff, as Hudson did, to further a policy agenda that supports the progressive tenets of the charter school movement. To advance progressive coalition-building, charter leaders, board trustees, and staff should also nurture their school's relationships with community stakeholders by collaborating with local arts, cultural, and religious organizations. Integrating into the community fabric in this way is in concert with the communitarian aims of progressive and democratic schooling, contrary to the self-serving goals of market-oriented education (Engel, 2000; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Finally, a market-oriented education context is generally hostile toward teachers' unions, framing unions as barriers to effective education reform (Fuller, 2010; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). For their part, unions have also long opposed charter schools, critiquing them for their lack of job security and their association with a broader educational privatization agenda (Alliance for Quality Education, 2015). However, a progressive charter school coalition should incorporate teachers' unions, as unions support many of the policy issues for which progressive charters also stand. These include equitable resource distribution, fair wages and benefits for teachers, and small class sizes (R. M. Cohen, 2015; Young, 2011). Unionized charter schools such as Hudson are well-positioned to lead coalition-building across unions and progressive charters.

Implications for Research

Given how many charter schools are often closed to qualitative researchers (DiMartino & Jessen, 2018), this study extended the limited qualitative research base on charter operations. Specifically, this study's qualitative design afforded an in-depth investigation into the practices, resources, and knowledge of three independent charter schools as they each endeavored to sustain their progressive missions in a neoliberal market context. To further extend this line of inquiry, and contribute to the knowledge base on the progressive pedagogical and political possibilities for charter schools, future research would benefit from a more action-oriented

methodological approach. For example, Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology brings together researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders as collaborators in the inquiry process, enabling them to collectively carry out research whose findings will have the potential to effect positive social change (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). A PAR project would involve progressive charter school educators, students, and advocates as research collaborators, drawing upon their knowledge and experiences in the design and execution of a study aimed at illuminating the possibilities and constraints to achieving progressive charter schooling.

Future research would also benefit from incorporating the perspectives of parents, students, and other community stakeholders. This study focused on school leaders and board trustees as key stewards of their schools' progressive missions. An extension of this line of inquiry would investigate how, if at all, families and other stakeholders contributed to mission maintenance or mission drift. Research demonstrates that White, middle-class, and affluent parents in particular help to shape a public school's reputation as prestigious or elite (Brown & Makris, 2018; Posey-Maddox, 2014). Similarly, what role do parents play in potentially shaping a school's progressive orientation, or leading a school to depart from progressivism? What role do other community members play? Qualitative research that captures diverse stakeholders' experiences and perspectives can lend greater complexity to the empirical research on progressive charter schools.

Finally, a longitudinal study would lend much insight into the evolution of charter schools' missions from progressive to more market-oriented. This study captured one academic school year, and a more longitudinal study could reveal, for instance, how Hudson navigates a new era as a two-school charter network, how Liberty's sustainability mission may evolve during the school's second charter term, or how Empire's equity and diversity mission may play out as neighborhood demographics continue to change. Findings from a longitudinal study of progressive charter school survival strategies would potentially be of great use to charter educators, revealing what barriers and opportunities to progressive education emerged over time.

Toward a Progressive Education Policy Agenda

As the cases of Hudson, Liberty, and Empire illustrate, widespread market values in American politics and society and disproportionate political support for market-based education have constrained the progressive pedagogical and political potential of the charter school movement. Instead, the competitive market system encourages self-interested behaviors, compelling progressive charters to adapt their founding missions and mimic some of the ways in which market-oriented charters advance their competitive edge. In turn, despite their professed commitments to advancing child-centered instruction, equitable educational opportunity, and community responsibility, this study's focal charters each contributed to already existing resource inequities across affluent and poor communities. Moreover, each school, to varying degrees, furthered a competitive market system that commoditizes public education, advantages already privileged schools, and deepens racial and socioeconomic segregation. Extending the argument that the basic grammar of schooling is resistant to change (Tyack & Tobin, 1994), this study demonstrates how a neoliberal grammar of schooling constrains progressive education and instead reinforces instructional, political, and community engagement practices legitimated by the market. Only when educators, families, and advocates challenge this grammar of schooling and mobilize around a progressive education policy agenda will the charter school movement achieve its progressive pedagogical and political goals.

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Appendix: Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol: Charter School Leaders

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me! The purpose of my study is to understand in-depth how various charter schools in New York City that are unattached to large networks mobilize support for their continued existence and growth. I grew interested in this topic after teaching in both public and charter school settings in New York City.

Today I'll be asking you some questions about your work as a charter school leader, and specifically, how you work to mobilize support for this school.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!

Background and work

To begin, I'd like to learn more about your background and the background of this school.

1. Can you please describe your professional background and how you came to work at this school?

2. Please describe your role as a leader of this school and the work you do. What are some of your major responsibilities?

3. I have read a little about the history of this school on your website, but I'd like to hear your perspective. Can you please describe the history of this school?
   - When was the school founded, and by whom?
   - What was the founders' rationale for establishing this school?

4. How would you describe the overall mission and values of this school?
   - In your experience, has this mission remained relatively stable over the years, or has it evolved? Why do you think this is the case?

5. There are over 200 charter schools in New York City. In your opinion, what distinguishes this charter school from the others?

Process of gaining political, ideological, and financial support

I'd like to switch gears and focus now on asking some questions about how this school generates and maintains support. When answering these questions, please avoid identifying individuals by name, in order to protect their privacy, though it is fine for you to name categories of people (e.g., parents, board members) or names of organizations.

6. What, if any, are some challenges this school faces when it comes to sustaining or growing the organization?

7. Who do you go to for advice or information regarding strategies for growing or sustaining this charter school?
    - *Probe:* Who do you go to for advice or information regarding:
        - Charter school policy?
        - Charter school funding sources?

8. When it comes to growing or sustaining this charter school, who are your allies?
    - *Probe:* Parents; board members; community or nonprofit organizations; donors; policymakers; businesses
    - What do they do? / What role do they play?
    - Why is their support necessary?
    - How did/do you go about reaching out to these people? Has this process evolved over the years, and if so, how?

9. Were you surprised by who turned out to be your allies? Why or why not?

10. *(If applicable)* I saw on your website that this school has a range of community partners and supporters.
    - Can you describe for me the various ways these partners support this school?
    - How has the constellation of partnerships changed or evolved over the years, if at all?
    - How do you go about soliciting the support of these partners? Has this process evolved over the years, and if so, how?

11. You mentioned that this school has a particular mission oriented around [XXX]. How, if at all, does this mission impact the process of generating political, ideological, and financial support for this school?

12. In the current political climate, wherein President Trump and Secretary DeVos have expressed support of charter schools, how, if at all, has that impacted the process of generating political, financial, and ideological support for this school?
    - *Probe:* Has the composition of this school's network of supporters changed since the election? If so, how?

13. In your opinion, what, if any, policy changes are necessary in order for this school to thrive? For the charter school sector in New York City to thrive?

14. What are your goals or aspirations for this school's next 5 years? 10 years?

Interview Protocol: Charter School Board Trustees

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me! The purpose of my study is to understand in-depth the landscape of charter schools in New York City and how various charter schools mobilize support for their continued existence and growth. I grew interested in this topic after teaching in both public and charter school settings in New York City.

Today I'll be asking you some questions about your work as a charter school board member and how your school mobilizes support.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!

Professional background and board member experience
To begin, I'd like to learn more about your background, how you came to serve as a board member at this school, and what your work as a board member entails.

1. How did you first come to serve as a board member at this school?

2. What unique skills or expertise do you feel you contribute as a board member?

3. Can you please describe for me what the work of a board member entails? What are some of your major roles and responsibilities?

4. During your time on the board, what have been some major issues or decisions the board of trustees has had to handle?

5. How are decisions made among members of the board?

6. Can you give me a specific example of a recent decision the board made, and how you all came to that decision?

7. What do you enjoy the most about serving on this charter school's board of trustees?

Process of gaining political, ideological, and financial support
I'd like to switch gears and focus now on asking some questions about how this school generates and maintains support. When answering these questions, please avoid identifying individuals by name, in order to protect their privacy, though it is fine for you to name categories of people (e.g., parents, board members) or names of organizations.

8. My understanding is that this school has a very specific mission oriented around [e.g., progressive pedagogy, serving an integrated population]. From your experience, how, if at all, does this mission impact the process of garnering political, financial, and ideological support for this school?

9. Can you give me a few examples of your major sources of support?

10. How, if at all, has this constellation of supporters changed or evolved over the years?

11. How do you go about soliciting the support of your partners? Has this process evolved over the years, and if so, how?

12. What, if any, are some challenges this school faces when it comes to sustaining or growing the organization?

13. When it comes to growing or sustaining this charter school, who are your allies?
    - *Probe:* Parents; community or nonprofit organizations; donors; policymakers; businesses
    - What do they do? / What role do they play?
    - Why is their support necessary?
    - How did/do you go about reaching out to these people?

14. Were you surprised by who turned out to be your allies? Why or why not?

15. Who do you go to for advice or information regarding strategies for growing or sustaining this charter school?

    - *Probe:* Who do you go to for advice or information regarding:
        - Charter school policy?
        - Charter school funding sources?

16. In the current political climate, where President Trump and Secretary DeVos have expressed support of charter schools, how, if at all, has this impacted the process of generating political, financial, and ideological support for this school?

    - *Probe:* Has the composition of this schools network of supporters changed since the election? If so, how?

17. In your opinion, what, if any, policy changes are necessary in order for this school to thrive?

18. What are your goals or aspirations for this school's next 5 years? 10 years?

Interview Protocol: Charter School Advocates

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me! The purpose of my study is to understand in-depth the landscape of charter schools in New York City and how various charter schools mobilize support for their continued existence and growth. I grew interested in this topic after teaching in both public and charter school settings in New York City.

Today I'll be asking you some questions about your work at this organization and how this organization works to support charter schools in New York City.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!

Professional background and work at the organization
To begin, I'd like to learn more about your professional background, how you came to your current position at this organization, and what your work entails.

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about your own professional background?

2. How and why did you first come to work at this organization?

3. Can you please describe for me your work entails? What are some of your major roles and responsibilities?

4. What do you enjoy the most about your work?

5. What do you find most challenging about your work?

6. In your opinion, why do we need charter schools? (Why do we need charter schools in this CSD?)

Organization's mission and work
I'd like to switch gears and ask you some questions about the mission of this organization and how this organization works to support charter schools.

7. Can you please describe the history of this organization?
   - When was the organization founded, by whom, and for what reasons?

8. How would you describe the overall mission and values of this organization?
   - In your experience, has this mission remained relatively stable over the years, or has it evolved?
   - Why do you think this is the case?

9. Can you please describe for me the concrete ways in which this organization works to support charter schools?

- *Probe:* Financial contributions, consulting, lobbying

10. Can you please describe the impact of this organization's work on the charter school movement in New York City?
    - *Probe*: Can you give an example of a time when this organization did something that impacted charter school policy or facilitated charter growth in some way?

11. Does this organization support particular types of charter schools, or do you lend support to the sector as a whole?
    - What types do you support / not support, and why?

I'll now ask you some questions about which groups of people support and oppose your work. When answering these questions, please avoid identifying individuals by name, in order to protect their privacy, though it is fine for you to name categories of people (e.g., parents, board members) or names of organizations.

12. Who do you go to for advice or information regarding strategies for growing or sustaining charter schools?
    - *Probe:* Who do you go to for advice or information regarding:
      - Charter school policy?
      - Charter school funding sources?

13. Who are your allies in the work of supporting charter schools / expanding the sector?
    - *Probe:* Parents; board members; community or nonprofit organizations; donors; policymakers; businesses
    - What do they do? / What role do they play?
    - Why is their support necessary?
    - How did/do you go about reaching out to these people?

14. What is the nature of your relationship with your allies?
    - Is the alliance formal or informal?
    - What does this look like?

15. Were you surprised by who turned out to be your allies? Why or why not?

16. Who, if any, are some of the individuals or groups who you perceive as opposed to your work?
    - *Probe*: Policy actors, advocacy groups, philanthropic groups, community/civic groups, CMOs
    - What does their opposition look like?
    - How has their opposition affected your work, if at all?

17. In your view, what are some major challenges to charter school growth?
    - *Probe*: Policy, funding, facilities, opposition

Public education in New York City

So far, I've learned a lot from your expertise and experience working for this organization. I'd like to close our interview by asking you a few broad questions about public education in New York City.

18. In your view, is public education in New York City more or less equitable today than in the past? How so?

19. What would a more equitable, democratic public education system in New York City look like for you?

20. Do you think this vision, or parts of it, are attainable? Why or why not?