

The Framing of Community in High School Guiding Statements:

A Comparative Analysis of Traditional

Public Schools and Charter Schools

by

Constantin Schreiber

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Gustavo Fischman, Chair
Katherine Anderson
Jeanne M. Powers
Audrey Beardsley

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ABSTRACT

This study describes how the concept of “community” is framed in traditional public and charter high school guiding statements and interviews with school leaders. Guiding statements from public high schools in Arizona were analyzed and interviews were conducted with principals from traditional public schools and charter school principals. The findings suggested similarities between traditional public high schools and charter high schools in their framing of the concept of community, suggesting that schools are loosely coupled to state and federal education departments in particular, and to varying degrees at the district level: The guiding statements and high school leaders generally distinguished between the “school as community” frame inside the school and the “the local community” frame focused on the community outside of the school. Both traditional public high schools and charter schools emphasized the importance of both frames and their connections with “the local community.” Differences between traditional public schools and charter schools were observed, as schools appeared to attempt to legitimize themselves in different ways to the communities they are located in. Despite open enrollment policies leading to inter-district enrollment, traditional public schools have a mandate to primarily serve students from a specific area and were framed in the guiding statements and by school leaders as being part of and serving a geographically defined community that they have close ties to, the “school as a member of community” frame. Charter schools, on the other hand, focused on creating and serving a specific educational community characterized by shared interests, ideals, and

expectations (“school as community”) and contributing to the community that the school is located in (“school as a contributor to community”).

DEDICATION

To Brooke, Isla, Annemarie und Clemens, Jonas and Frederik, and the long list of other great people who have supported me in so many different ways on my long academic journey up to this point. I have met great people in Dorsten, Münster, Stoke-on-Trent, Muncie, State College, Tempe, and New York City. Words cannot express how much I appreciate having all of you in my life. You have taught me so much, made it possible for me to have so many experiences, and allowed me to my life to the fullest. I am eternally grateful to you for that and I am looking forward to the next chapters of my life with you now.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the National Commission on Excellence in Education's publication of the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a series of well-documented (Decker & Decker, 2003; Fusarelli, 2002; Mehta, 2013; Smith & Sobel, 2014) and much-discussed changes have taken place in U.S. public education: an increasing influence of federal policies on state and local education, a dominant narrative of underperforming schools, the rise of the school reform movement and accountability measures, including increased testing, and the introduction of charter schools (e.g., Fusarelli, 2002; Mehta, 2013), among others. Mehta (2013) characterizes these changes as part of a currently dominant policy paradigm in American education, which

holds that educational success is central to national, state, and individual economic success; that American schools across the board are substantially underperforming and in need of reform; that schools rather than social forces should be held responsible for academic outcomes; and that success should be measured by externally verifiable tests. (p. 286)

This paradigm is marked by greater federal and state influence on the traditionally decentralized system of public schooling in the United States, giving "the federal government... a greater degree of control over schooling than at any previous point in the nation's history" (Mehta, 2013, p. 285). The policy focus on school improvement has been a driving force in the change of public schooling in the United States from a

relatively decentralized system to one in which schools are closely and critically monitored by policy makers, administrators, and the general public.

Parallel to these changes since the 1980s, the attraction of the concept of community has remained strong in many areas of society, a phenomenon that has been argued to be caused by larger societal developments (Blackshaw, 2010; Keller, 2003; Putnam, 1995; 2000; 2015): Studdert (2005) notes that “widespread concerns over social cohesion and the degenerative effects on community of two decades of neo-liberalism and globalization” (p. 9) have renewed interest in the concept of community in social science research, politics, and the general public (Blackshaw, 2010; Gereluk, 2006; Merz & Furman, 1997; Studdert 2005). As Blackshaw (2010) points out, “[t]he word ‘community’ is encountered everywhere these days” (p. 19). The literature on community in the field of education is large and varied, large parts of it focusing on helping teachers and school administrators with school-community relationships and with building communities within schools (Decker & Decker, 2003; Merz & Furman, 1997; Preston, 2011; Smith & Sobel, 2014). However, what exactly community means is often unclear or not spelled out.

Schools have traditionally served a very much local, geographically defined community, as students were assigned to public schools based on their place of residence. The concept of local control is deep-rooted in American schooling: “since the nation’s inception, schooling in America has been controlled by local school districts, with states playing an important but secondary role” (Mehta, 2013, p. 288). To this day, state

governments tend to stress local control in education, although this is increasingly conflicting with the recent trend toward federal control.

Given this policy context, this study attempts to understand how the concept of community is framed (Lakoff, 2010; Schön & Rein, 1994) in the guiding statements of high schools and by high school leaders in Arizona. According to Lakoff (2010), frames are “typically unconscious structures” which are composed of “semantic roles, relations between roles, and relations to other frames” (p. 71). The concept of frames is useful for investigating (educational) policy, which rests on “underlying structures of beliefs, perceptions, and appreciations” (Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 23).

The analysis of the framing of the notion of community will also explore the notions of schools as loose or tightly coupled institutions.¹ Prior to the policy shifts since the 1980s, schools were usually thought of as loosely coupled (Weick, 1976; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; 1978), “a term which describes the weakness or relative absence of control, influence, coordination, or interaction between events or parts of a system” (Pajak, 1979, p. 83). Given the recent policy developments outlined above, it has been argued that schools have become much more tightly coupled to education departments at the federal and state levels, meaning controlled to a greater degree by federal and state policy (Mehta, 2013). There is then an inherent contradiction between the core features of the policy paradigm described by Mehta (2013) and the idea of schools as loosely-coupled systems proposed by Weick (1976). Despite the new policy paradigm, which includes the introduction of charter schools (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015) and the alleged

¹ See Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework for more detail about the notions of schools as loose or tight coupling institutions

tightening of the coupling within the education system, schools are still considered to be working closely with and for the communities they serve. The tensions emerging from different modes of controls and ideas of community is the focus of this study, particularly between traditional public schools (TPSs) and charter schools.

Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

Charter schools, “publicly funded schools of choice that operate outside the direct control of school districts” (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013, p. 461), have increased rapidly in number since their introduction in the 1990s. Between the 1999-2000 and 2012-2013 school years, the number of charter schools in the United States increased from 1,500 to 6,100, an increase from 1.7 percent of all public schools to 6.2 percent over the same time period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

A major difference between charter and TPSs is that “unlike most district-run public schools, no students are assigned to charters...As public schools, they are open to all, and must randomise admissions” (Lubienski, 2013, p. 500). In the case of Arizona, the introduction of charter schools and open enrollment policies means that students and their parents can generally choose what school they would like to attend. Whereas TPSs have typically served a geographically defined community of parents and students, charter schools constitute a new type of school in the public K-12 education system that operates differently from most TPSs, not just, but also with regards to the notion of community. This is the case even when considering desegregation efforts, magnet schools, and other schools and policies blurring the idea of schools serving specific zip

codes, i.e. geographical areas, as TPSs have typically served a given, geographically defined community of parents and students.

Charter schools, just like TPSs, have relationships with the communities they serve and the ones they are located in, but how they define those communities is not well understood. TPSs have typically existed for longer than their charter school counterparts, have traditionally served local communities, and have defined these communities geographically. Charter schools, argued by some to be emerging from or at least addressing community needs (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Finnigan, 2007; Nathan, 1996; Roch & Sai, 2015), could be expected to express such strong community ties that reflect a community's values and expectations. The question then can be asked whether the guiding statements of charter schools and TPSs will reflect such ties to local communities in similar ways.

Another reason that charter schools' approaches to the notion of community might differ from those of public schools is that charter schools "are envisioned to provide an alternative to parents who are dissatisfied with their children's school" (Ertas & Roch, 2014, p. 553). Similarly, charter schools may create a particularly type of community inside the school: "By virtue of thematic focus, charter schools are able to attract like-minded parents, students, teachers, and administrators, and perforce can form a more socially cohesive community" (Deal & Hentschke, 2004, p. 17).

Charter schools' approaches to community may also differ from those of TPSs as one can question if they are "driven by mission and, therefore, essentially grounded in equity and access?; or, driven by profit that creates a market-driven environment where

families and children are reduced to consumer status?” (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015, p. 11). In other words, engaging with the local community may be less important for charter schools as they are more focused on those students and parents who they serve, as Ford and Ihrke’s (2015) study of non-profit charter school board members suggests. At the same time, community may be more central to charter schools’ mission, which should be reflected in guiding statements.

This question leads to another issue, which is that a “charter school” is an umbrella term for a diverse group of schools (Fox & Wolf, 2015; Ertas & Roch, 2014). As already indicated above, it is also relevant to compare TPSs and charter schools because charter schools have more freedom from regulations (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Pelz, 2015) and few if any studies have focused on whether this freedom is reflected in their approaches to the notion of community. Further, it has been argued that the competition that charter schools bring into the system affects TPSs in various ways (Ertas, 2013). If charter schools indeed “change how schools are governed, how they are structured, and how they are managed” (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015, p. 2) this could then also affect the content of guiding statements and school leaders approaches to the notion of community.

Currently, TPSs find themselves under pressure from the competition from charter schools and accountability demands, and “local control has slowly eroded, as the federal and state governments exert ever-greater control over the educational process” (Fusarelli, 2000, p. 562). By comparing the guiding statements of traditional public high schools (TPSs) and charter high schools in Arizona, this study can help us gain insights

into the framing of the concept of community by school leaders as well as contribute to the discussion about whether schools are tightly coupled to state and federal policy today.

Research Problem and Purpose

One of the places in which we may find spelled-out frames of community are their guiding statements, which are here defined as their mission and vision statements, their educational philosophies, goals, and values. School guiding statements reflect a school's values, as they are used both to: "create meaning within an organization" (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) and to communicate values and direction to internal and external stakeholders (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997)" (Brockett, 2014, p. 4). Thus, guiding statements can serve as a valuable window into schools' beliefs around core concepts such as community. For this study, I will follow Haas and Fischman's (2010) analysis of frames in higher education and ask how the concept of community is framed by high school leaders in Arizona, as a way of describing their underlying structures of beliefs.

Research Questions and Significance

This study aims to understand how community is framed differently between TPSs and charter schools. Specifically, I explore the following research questions:

1. How is the notion of *community* framed in high school guiding statements in Arizona?
2. How do frames of *community* vary between traditional public school and charter school leaders?

Research in the field of education has been characterized by a relative lack of attention to guiding statements, the majority of studies having taken place outside of

education (Brockett, 2014, p. xiv). Various aspects of guiding statements, such as their processes of creation, content, and impact, are still being explored by scholars in a developing niche of the field of education research (Allen, 2001; Weiss & Piderit, 1999; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Schafft & Biddle, 2013; Stemler, Bebell, & Sonnabend, 2011; Brockett, 2014). The results of the current study will thus add to the emerging body of literature on guiding statements by focusing on the framing of the notion of community, and by shedding light on how guiding statements are created, an area of research that is also still in development (Stemler et al., 2011). Further, except for Ayers' (2005; 2015) work on community colleges, no research has focused on whether and how guiding statements are affected by the predominant political paradigms of their time. The present study will also provide a more comprehensive comparison between the frames found in the guiding statements of TPSs and charter schools than prior studies. In the following, will first present the theoretical framework of the study (Chapter 2) and then move on to a review of the literature (Chapter 3) and the study's methodology (Chapter 4), followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings (Chapter 5) and the conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following, I first introduce the larger theoretical perspective of new institutionalism and define the concepts of legitimacy and isomorphism, used in the analysis of the guiding statements and interviews. I then discuss the theory of schools as loosely coupled systems, which can more specifically help explain similarities and differences in symbolic texts such as school guiding statements. Next, I link this theoretical framework to the current context in U.S. K-12 education policy. Finally, I explain how the concept of loose/tight coupling will be used in the analysis of the data.

New Institutionalism

Unlike prior organizational theories that conceptualized organizations as rational actors (Forgues et al. 2012; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011; Wang, 2016), Ogawa (2015) points out that New Institutionalism emphasizes a “more ‘natural’ view of organization, which illuminated internal uncertainties and consequent ‘loose coupling’ of organizational elements” (p. 795). New Institutionalists see “institutions as meaning-giving social constructs that guide actors through the ‘muddiness’ of social reality” (Wang, 2016, p. 350). Two key concepts from new institutionalism, isomorphism and legitimacy, provide a framework for interpreting the findings of this study.

The early theorists of new institutionalism argued that loosely coupled institutions become similar in structure and institutional behavior, a phenomenon which they described using the term “isomorphism” (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Meyer 1980; DiMaggio & Powell 1983). New Institutionalists propose three forms of isomorphism: coercive

isomorphism (regulations and mandates, rewards and punishments), normative isomorphism (professional codes and standards, certification and accreditation requirements), and mimetic isomorphism (copying the success of other organizations) (Di Maggio & Powell, 1991; Fusarelli, 2002). All three of these have been applied in loose coupling analyses of the U.S. school system, describing schools as “having an organizational structure that reflect[s] external (mostly local, but increasingly state and national) demands” (Firestone, 2015, p. 49).

Legitimacy is seen as one of the major constraints of educational organizations as schools need to be trusted by the public (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Kleinman & Osley-Thomas, 2014; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). The idea of legitimacy in New Institutionalism rests on the assumption that “organizations such as schools and colleges...are held together more by shared beliefs—‘myths’—than by technical exigencies or a logic of efficiency” (Meyer & Rowan, 2006, p. 5), meaning that these shared beliefs rather than measures of school performance lead to legitimacy. As legitimacy is also often obtained by conforming to established cultural values or shared beliefs, the search for legitimacy frequently causes organizations to become increasingly isomorphic given the relatively narrow range of such established values (Kleinman & Osley-Thomas, 2014; Pogodzinski, 2016).

Legitimacy in the eyes of the public may be a more pressing concern for charter schools than it is for TPSs. By definition, charter schools are institutions that are relatively new in the history of schooling in the United States, having first been introduced in the early 1990s. If, as some claim, they indeed arise from community needs

(Chubb & Moe, 1990; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Finnigan, 2007; Nathan, 1996; Roch & Sai, 2015) then they may in fact represent shared cultural values through their educational mission or instructional methods. Given their more recent introduction into the education system, charter schools may feel a different and/or stronger need to legitimize themselves to the public, be it to the physical, geographical community they are located in or to the community of people they serve or cater to.

Schools as Loosely and Tightly Coupled Systems

The idea of coupling “captures how organizations are made up of interdependent elements that are more or less responsive to, and more or less distinctive from each other” (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011, p. 588). Tight coupling is characterized by “responsiveness without distinctiveness” (Orton & Weick, 1990, p. 205). For example, school leaders follow policies from school districts and state departments of education in detail. This then leads to highly similar structures and organizational behavior between different schools. According to Orton and Weick (1990), loose coupling can be defined as situations in which organizations or systems are characterized by “both responsiveness and distinctiveness” (p. 205) between elements or actors within the organization system. In loosely coupled systems, “coupled events are responsive, but [...] each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (Weick, 1976, p. 3). In such a loosely coupled system, “schools smooth over structural inconsistencies by complying in highly symbolic ways to macrocultural forces emanating from the environment” (Aurini, 2012, p. 375).

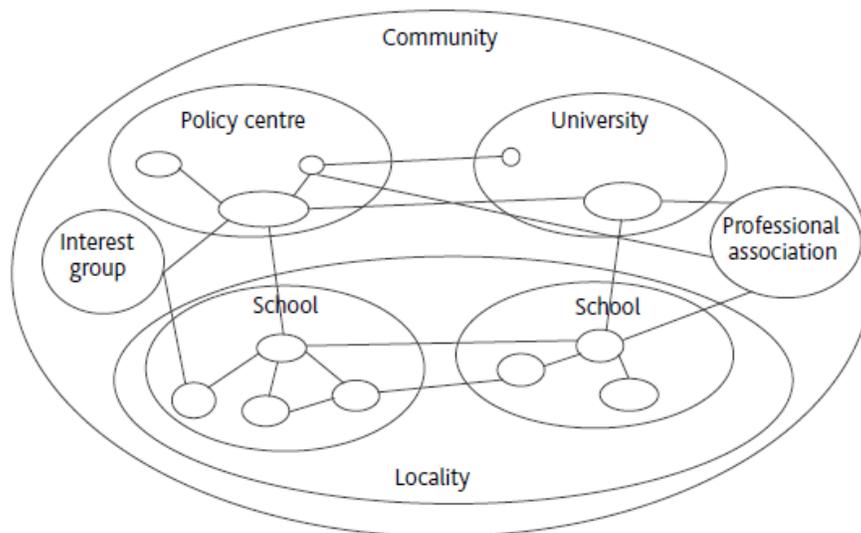


Figure 1: Education as a coupled system (Goldspink, 2007, p. 41).

Figure 1, adapted from Goldspink (2007), provides a visualization of education as a loosely coupled system. Schools are loosely coupled not only internally (through connections between administrators/leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders), but also loosely connected to the other stakeholders in their environments. While Goldspink’s visualization focuses on only a few actors in the system, leaving out education departments, school district, local stakeholders, etc., it emphasizes that loose coupling can apply to relationships between organizations or groups as well as between actors within organizations. Actors engage with each other, but largely preserve their own identity as ties are requiring them to behave in specific ways.

Since the mid-1970s, the theory of loose coupling has become central to scholars’ understanding of schooling in the United States (Fusarelli, 2002; Ingersoll, 1993). As Aurini (2012) points out, “the malleability of this concept, and its ability to explain the

‘structural looseness’ among parts of schooling systems, has made it a staple in studies of education organizations (p. 373). This is explained in more detail by Fusarelli (2002):

The principal utility of viewing schools as loosely coupled organizations is that it seems to accurately describe how schools actually operate (Deal and Celotti, 1980; Weick, 1982). Schools are more loosely coupled than most other organizations. Goals are multiple, often conflicting, and indeterminate. Technology is unclear. The participation and involvement of members is fluid (the number of participants is exceeded only by the various degrees of involvement of stakeholders). Rules are often violated in schools, and policy implementation is uneven (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). (p. 563)

The concept of loose coupling provides insights into why policy implementation is often uneven because school leaders, administrators, i.e. those generally in charge of implementing policy, frequently make changes that are symbolic with a focus on the schools' legitimacy (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). Common cultural and institutionalized views of schooling lead to isomorphism across schools. The symbolic nature of these changes and other results of loose coupling are described as both positive and negative for school performance (Aurini, 2012; Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Fusarelli, 2002; Pogodzinski, 2016).

Loose coupling theory thus suggests that individual schools have their own individual characteristics, but are responsive to the rest of the K-12 education system, including other schools as well as district, state, and federal education institutions and organizations. If a school is loosely coupled, the stakeholders within the system act

relatively independently, true to their own identities, and not necessarily responding to external requirements in the same ways, with the same speed, or even at all. However, coupling theory is not only hypothesized to apply to the systems inside of schools. It can also be applied to larger sub-systems of public schooling in the U.S. education system, as is the case in this study. Individual schools are attached to school districts, their state department of education, and ultimately the U.S. Department of Education, and all interact with each other. While they influence each other, they also create and maintain their own identities, and within this context, when schools are loosely coupled, they respond to requirements from these agencies in inconsistent, infrequent, and slow ways.

Loose coupling theory also posits that schools' responses to external regulations tend to be symbolic as school leaders find different ways to satisfy them. However, school leaders are not the only mediators at the school level. External regulations are followed, but interpreted in different ways by various stakeholders. This presence of multiple stakeholders and idiosyncratic structures and processes at each school frequently leads to slow response times in the implementation of policies (Weick, 1976). The creation of guiding statements can be part of such external regulations imposed on schools and they can be regarded as symbolic products of processes that often involve multiple stakeholders and unique structures.

Loose coupling then highlights the relative absence of centralized control over and within public schools in the United States, specifically the ways in which schools and thus often school leaders act in this context of relative decision-making freedom, as well as the consequences of these loose connections. Schools' responses to external control

can lead to similarities (isomorphisms) as schools conform to policies in largely symbolic ways that are shaped by the public. In order to legitimize their existence and practices, schools have to conform to public expectations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Kleinman & Osley-Thomas, 2014; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). These public expectations are not always spelled out, but school leaders, school staff, and stakeholders are likely aware of them. How schools frame communities is thus likely influenced by their concerns for legitimacy.

Schools always exhibit both loose and tight coupling linkages (Weick, 1982) and scholars agree that loose coupling theory is limited (Fusarelli, 2002). Many theorists today would agree that “there is indeed room for tight coupling in public education as well as loose coupling, centralization as well as decentralization” (Boyd & Crowson, 2002, p. 524). This study employs the framework of loose/tight coupling, resting on a New Institutional understanding of high schools as organizations, to interpret the findings of the content analysis of the high school guiding statements and interviews with school leaders.

Loose and Tight Coupling in U.S. K-12 Education

Some scholars argue that the K-12 education system in the United States is more tightly coupled (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Diamond, 2012; Firestone, 2009; Fusarelli, 2002; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Mehta, 2013; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Pollock & Winton, 2012; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002), “to a degree that would have been inconceivable even 30 years ago” (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 571). The tightened coupling is described as a consequence of the increased pressure for schools to conform to federal

accountability policies. Federal initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race To The Top* have created structures that incentivize states and their school districts to conform to federal policies. At the same time, states have also created their own accountability systems aimed at measuring school performance or achievement, such as for example the Arizona Report Card system, in which each school is assigned a letter grade based on student performance indicators. While such systems do not directly require schools to perform well on these indicators, they incentivize doing so in order to obtain a high grade. As “the relationships between local, state, and national actors and institutions in the educational arena in the USA are changing and being renegotiated” (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 567), scholars point to the need for re-examining how the concept of loose coupling applies to schooling in the United States (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Likewise, many scholars have noted qualitative differences in the coupling between traditional public schools and charter schools (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Diamond, 2012; Firestone, 2009; Fusarelli, 2002; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Mehta, 2013; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Pollock & Winton, 2012; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002).

The new policy environment means that several factors push for tighter coupling of the education system, “including external, environmental pressures for tighter coupling; the emergence of powerful new institutional actors; and an emerging institutional capacity, coupled with isomorphic processes” (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 562). These changes lead from a decentralized education system to one marked by “fragmented centralization” (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 561). However, research on the increase in tight

coupling is relatively scarce, varied in terms of findings, and typically focused on instructional practices (Aurini, 2012; Diamond, 2012; Hallett, 2010; Rowan, 2006a).

What seems certain is that the understanding of schools as loosely coupled systems is too limited today (Davies, Quirke, & Aurini, 2006; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). As Aurini (2012) aptly summarizes, the challenge for scholars is to describe the grey area between descriptions of schools as loosely or tightly coupled systems:

We have the conceptual tools to theorize a loosely coupled education organization that enjoys a stable revenue stream and clientele, high levels of parental confidence, and professional norms that support teachers' autonomy within classrooms. In the 1970s, public schools fit this image. We also have frameworks for conceptualizing a tightly coupled education organization that operates in a highly competitive marketplace, that has a clear mission, and that offers courses that are amenable to some type of performance indicator (e.g., LSAT preparation). The changing environmental and organizational landscape of education is far messier. (p. 383)

In her statement, Aurini points out elements of tighter coupling that are part of that the new educational policy paradigm described by Mehta (2013) and concludes that the picture is neither black nor white. Aurini also mentions a "clear mission" as key component of today's schools, thus highlighting how expectations for mission or guiding statements may have changed in a policy environment considered by some to be more tightly coupled.

Mapping the Study

Figure 2 provides an overview over how the theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, as well as presentation, discussion, and interpretation of the findings are connected. While simplifying the relationships and processes at work, it maps the study with regards to key concepts and their influences on the analysis: isomorphism and legitimacy provide guidance for the interpretation of the findings of the frames for community produced by the content analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews.

Loose coupling highlights individual characteristics of schools while also considering their responsiveness to the rest of the K-12 education system. Studying how community is framed through the analysis of guiding statements and interviews with school leaders, as well as examining the existing policy framework in which these frames for community are created, allows for the consideration of both individuality and responsiveness. As a New Institutional approach, loose coupling theory focuses on interactions between organizations and their relationships with society – schools’ framings of community as well as the creation and content of guiding statements fall operate in this interactive space. That said, as Figure 2 suggests, the study’s methodology is also informed by the review of the literature on the concept of community and school guiding statements.

Figure 2 also provides a roadmap for the following chapters: The Literature Review (Chapter 3) is presented first, outlining the central concept of community as well as the development of charter schools and the current state of research on school guiding statements. Chapter 4 (Methodology) is based on the review of the literature on

community in particular, and of course leads to the description and interpretation of the results of the analysis in the Findings chapter and the Conclusion.

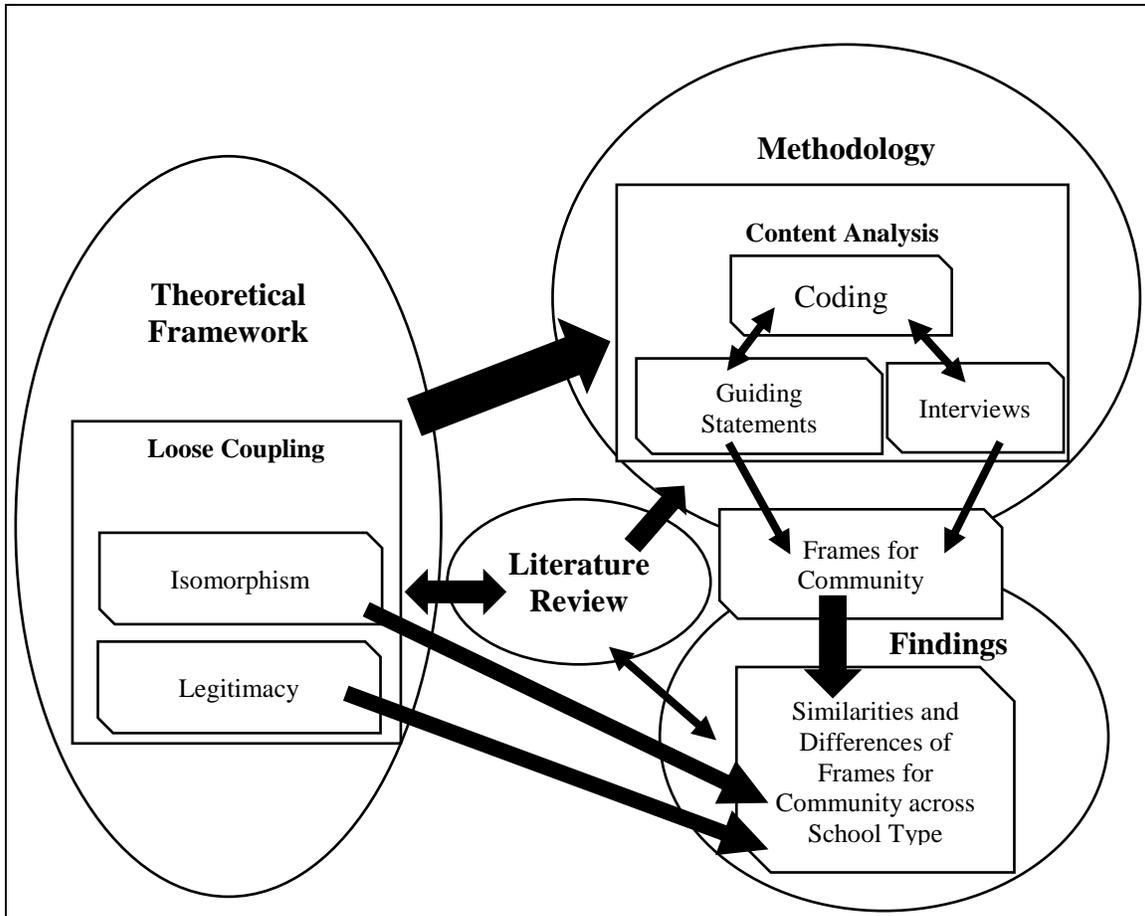


Figure 2. Mapping the study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community

At the core of this study is the notion of community, a concept which is notoriously blurry and hard to define. However, it appears to play a key role in the working of American schools. For example, many school leaders, administrators, or teachers would agree that “it is important...to strengthen a form of community that is appropriate and viable in the modern world” (Arthur, 2000, p. 19). Informed by the literature on the concept of community, the present study does not start out with a clearly delimited, measurable definition of community. In fact, the goal is to understand how community is framed in high school guiding statements today.

Producing a definition of community is difficult at best and impossible at worst, as many scholars point out (Aku, 2000; Cohen, 1985; Creed, 2006; Little, 2002). Reading the works of scholars on the subject, it is worth noting that they typically do not provide a clear, succinct definition of the term or concept (Amit, 2002a; Cohen, 1985; Creed, 2006; Little, 2002, Merz & Furman, 1997). Instead, they highlight the myriad of forms community can take, its various possible elements and aspects, the effects it can have, and theoretical approaches to the concept over time. Nonetheless, a review of the basic definitions that do exist and key elements is necessary. Howell (2002) proposes that “the word ‘community’ both marks that the members have something in common and that this commonality distinguishes one community from another” (p. 86). Historically, geography has been a core part of definitions of community, which was “symbolised by

geographical stability and the persistence of ‘old families’ who have lived in the same place for generations.” (Charles & Davies, 2005, p. 686). At the same time, the view of communities being in flux, dynamic, and always changing has become more prevalent (Beck, 1999; Brent, 2004; Giddens, 1998): communities “have not become defunct since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, but have modified according to the social needs and changing demands of civil society” (Gereluk, 2006, p. 145).

Despite the move away from definitions emphasizing limits based on geography and time, “social closeness and distance still tend to be articulated in spatial terms; territory itself often matters as a basis for community that sometimes is manifested by a process of ‘remooring’ the community concept itself” (Kempny, 2002, p. 62). This also applies to schools: traditional ideas of village, community, or neighborhood schools tied to a relatively small, clearly defined geographical area have changed over the last century, first with desegregation and then with the introduction of school choice (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011).

At a minimum, all definitions of community share the “assumption that communities consist of groups of people who share, or are compelled to share, some form of connectivity” (Adams et al, 2014, p. 10). One example of a more specific definition is Keller’s (2003) description of four key themes of community. The first is “community as place, turf, or territory” – i.e. a geo-spatial dimension. In the Arizona context, this could be the city of Phoenix. The second is “community as shared ideals and expectations” – for example, the strong belief in personal freedoms in the United States. Third, Keller identifies community as a network of social ties and allegiances, i.e. those based on

frequent human interactions. And finally, there is community as a collective framework, where “community defines, names, organizes, aggregate activities and projects, and encompasses the institutions and rules that guide the collectivity” (p. 7), as for example schools who educate with a particular purpose of education in mind (Keller, 2003)

The similarities of Keller’s four key themes to the defining basic characteristics of a community following Adams et al. (2014) are notable:

- a group of people (similar to Keller’s requirement of social ties between people)
- communication between these people, defined broadly “as an exchange of shared values, norms, expectations, etiquette and as a process of negotiation” (Adams et al., 2014, p. 23) (includes Keller’s category of social ties and social ideals and expectations, as well as perhaps the idea of a collective framework)
- a shared space, whether geographical or virtual (parallel to Keller’s first major theme of geo-spatial characteristics)
- mutual effects of community and people on each other: People shape communities and communities shape people (the characteristic most different from Keller’s categories).

This overlap, which could be found with other scholars’ definitions as well, suggests that researchers can in fact agree on a few basic characteristics of the concept, which is I why I selected these underlying features as the foundation for the content analysis (see Chapter 4: Methodology).

Approaches to community. The notion of community generally evokes positive, nostalgic, or romanticized images, as has been pointed out for decades (Foster, 1997;

Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Shaw, 2008; Tett, 2010; Williams, 1976), or even since the foundational work of Tönnies (1887/1957). This nostalgia is based on the feeling that community has positive influences on its members and that such communities in turn have a larger positive effect on the larger society, i.e. positive effects on people who are not members of a specific community (Gereluk, 2006; Putnam, 1995; 2000; 2015). At the same time, researchers have also pointed to possible negative effects of communities, again for both their members and outsiders (cf. Bauman, 2001; Creed, 2006; Dyck, 2002; Keller, 2003; Little, 2002). In the following, I will first briefly discuss the development of different scholarly approaches to the notion of community, then highlight how contested the concept is in social science research.

The development of scholarly approaches. While early scholars such as Tönnies (1887/1957), Durkheim, Weber, and the Chicago School in the early 20th century (Amit 2002b) set the foundation for the study of community, it was not until the 1950s and 60s that social scientists attempted to define and make measurable the concept of community in an attempt to introduce scientific rigor into a popular notion (Cohen, 2002; Rose, 1999). Scholars studying community frequently cite the literature review conducted by George Hillery in 1955 as evidence for this diversity of approaches and definitions with regards to community (Adams, Feickert, Haut, & Sharaf, 2014; Amit, 2002b; Bell & Newby, 1972; Blackshaw, 2010; Creed, 2006; Fowler, 1991; Keller, 2003). Hillery identified 94 distinct definitions of the concept, highlighting the diversity of approaches, but also pointing out that communities were generally defined as social interactions taking place within a certain geographical area. Hillery's findings were subsequently

often interpreted as expressing the futility of defining the concept or as showcasing the questionable usefulness as a concept for analysis in the social sciences (Bell & Newby, 1972; Cohen, 2002). Nonetheless, Bell & Newby (1972) acknowledge that “a majority of definitions include, in increasing importance for each element, the following components of community: area, common ties and social interaction” (p. 29). This summary of features mirrors Keller’s (2003) and Adams et al.’s (2014) classifications of themes, again highlighting the general similarity of the basic definitions.

This brief summary of a large body of scholarly thought and research indicates that the term community has been and still is much discussed and contested. What is clear is that at the very minimum, community is defined by interactions between people within a given space. In this study, I used the more detailed classifications by Adams et al. (2014), Arthur (2003), and Keller (2003) (see Methodology for more detail).

Despite various criticisms of the scientific usefulness of the concept of community (Bauman, 2001; Cohen, 1985; 2002; Stacey, 1969), it is still found in social science research today “because it describes something essential and irreducible about the everyday reality of people’s lives and the spaces where those lives are lived” (Tett, 2010, p. 13). Even the skeptical Cohen (2002) admits: “It doesn’t follow that we should ban it from use – only that it is futile to try to theorize community other than in its *particular* uses” (p. 169). This study constitutes such a particular use in that it examines how community is framed in high school guiding statements as well as by school leaders.

The issue with applying the concept of community in social science research is not only that it is characterized by multiple meanings and fuzzy boundaries, but also that

it carries largely positive connotations, often leading to “flights of nostalgic fancy” (Foster, 1997, p. vii) regardless of reality, “suggesting a simpler and more meaningful way of being where the complexities of modernity are reduced to manageable issues” (Foster, 1997, p. vii). Bauman (2001) mirrors this view, describing community as a “paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there” (p. 3). Thus reduced, the concept of community has a simplifying effect that allows people to deal with the complexities of modern reality.

Foster (1997), Bauman (2001), and other scholars see the more frequent creation of imagined communities as a response to modern life. Amit (2002b), referencing Cohen (1985) and Appadurai (1996), suggests that “as the integrity of local neighborhoods is assailed by state policies or globalizing forces, communality increasingly has to be asserted or imagined symbolically rather than structurally” (p. 10) precisely as in the constructions of community in high school guiding statements. The caveats expressed by Bauman (2001), Cohen (1985; 2002), and others, especially the notion of the symbolic function of communities, inform the present study: the theory of frames was chosen to describe uses of a concept that is highly symbolic and socially constructed, rather than necessarily a reflection of reality.

Despite the scholarly skepticism toward the concept, studying the intersection of schools and the notion of community is especially relevant today given that communities have been perceived to be in decline in the United States (Adams, Feickert, Haut, & Sharaf, 2014; Bauman, 2001; Merz & Furman, 1997; Putnam, 1995; 2000; 2015; Sergiovanni, 1993). Since the 1980s, largely as a result of “widespread concerns over

social cohesion and the degenerative effects on community of two decades of neo-liberalism and globalization” (Studdert, 2005, p. 9), the concept of community has received more attention again in discourses across social science research, the general public, and politics (Blackshaw, 2010; Gereluk, 2006; Merz & Furman, 1997; Studdert 2005). As Blackshaw (2010) points out, “[t]he word ‘community’ is encountered everywhere these days.” (p. 19), and his assessment of the omnipresence of community in (post)modern discourse is shared by others (Creed, 2006; Fowler, 1991; Little, 2002).

To summarize thus far: community, over the last century and more, has been approached from a large diversity of perspectives and the scientific discussion around the concept has led to only basic agreements. While the generally positive connotation of the concept is recognized, scholars also point to potentially negative effects such as nostalgia for past communities that misrepresents historical facts or communities suppressing minorities. They also find that scientific approaches to and definitions of community are and have to be very much context-specific. The communities served by schools by definition feature members who at the very least share their attendance of a specific school (students) or their child/ren’s attendance of that school (parents).

Community and schools. Scholarly interest in the intersection between schools and communities can be traced back to the beginnings of schooling, or at the very least to the beginnings of scholarly attention to schools (Merz & Furman, 1997; Smith & Sobel, 2014). Similar to the study of the concept in general, there is no definite answer to the question of what community means in education (Gereluk, 2006). A brief overview of the different iterations of community in and around schools is helpful: Scholars have studied

communities in schools and school-community relationships have been in the focus of practitioner-oriented works (Decker & Decker, 2003; Merz & Furman, 1997; Preston, 2011; Smith & Sobel, 2014). Policy makers have used, interpreted, and re-interpreted the concept in numerous ways (Gereluk, p. x). It is undisputed, however, that the school is an organization that does bring people together, a characteristic which also remains a key feature of any community:

A school is necessarily a community – a community of pupils, teachers, parents. It is also, particularly through its parents, linked to the local community beyond its walls. A key function of schools is to help prepare pupils to become full participants in their community and eventually in society at large. (Arthur, 2000, p. viii)

For Arthur, there are then at least three larger types of communities closely connected to schools: the community of those attending and working within a school, i.e. the community of the school itself, the community of people living within an area around the school, and the larger society, the community of the nation, which all members of these smaller communities are part of. These three types of communities have also been identified by others, some of whom add learning communities/communities of practice within the schools (Lingard, Ranson, & Nixon, 2008), and they inform the basic distinctions between frames of community for the coding scheme in this study.

The various ways in which community has been identified and studied in and around schools show that “promoting community is sited at all levels of schooling, and for vastly different purposes and aims” (Gereluk, 2006, p. 39). Members of communities

in and around schools are not only students and teachers, but can also be parents, principals, administrators, and all other school staff. Depending on the specific definition of community, people living and working in the vicinity of the school could be included as well. Keller's (2003) elements of community can be found in this definition: First, community is a concept used to describe the school and the geographical area it is located in as a place. Community is also used to describe social ties and allegiances, again both within and outside of schools, for example in the forms of communities of practice formed by teachers and administrators. Guiding statements and the constructions of community in them fall under Keller's categories of "community as shared ideals and expectations" and "community as a collective framework."

It is fairly well-established that "schools in America are historically rooted in local, geographically defined communities" (Merz & Furman, 1997, p. 5). However, some scholars claim that public education focused on decreasing the influence of local school-community ties as early as the 19th century, instead promoting the goal of nation building, with the marketization of society being an additional element (Smith & Sobel, 2014). The decline of the notion of community and the rise of individualism is still lamented today. According to Putnam (1995; 2000; 2015) and others, schools today are given the burden of having to create or build community, or at least provide it since other institutions are in decline:

Traditionally there have been intermediate organizations in America that bridge the gap between family and society. But schools may be one of the last vestiges of such organizations as we tend to turn over more and more of our social and civic

responsibility to the state or to large bureaucratic organizations. (Merz & Furman, 1997, p. 32)

Yet, Merz and Furman (1997) also point out that traditional public schools are government agencies above all, as they “exist through contractual agreements with the citizenry for a specific purpose – to ‘educate’ the children of the local community. They are not voluntary ‘gathered communities’ of mind in the same sense as churches” (p. 36). However, there are many who argue that in a time of increasing school choice options, charter schools may in fact be voluntarily created communities or community organizations (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Finnigan, 2007; Nathan, 1996; Roch & Sai, 2015). After all, that is what choice is about: providing people with an alternative to education in traditional public schools and thus the opportunity to gather in a school of their liking.

Today, school administrators face a variety of societal developments that likely affect the way they think about the idea of community: Communities served by a school today may be more adequately described as “a collection of small family units that may or may not live in a life-style enclave and participate in other gathered communities” (Merz & Furman, 1997, p. 40). This is because people are part of more than one community, and communities are more diverse, more dynamic, and less clearly defined geographically. Yet policy makers, trying to counteract the perceived loss or decline of community, ask schools to go beyond being merely an educational institution to provide services and build community, both within and outside of the school (Thomson, 2008).

Two Major Changes in U.S. Educational Policy in the Last Two Decades: Tighter Coupling and Charter Schools

Scholars such as Meyer and Rowan (2006) and Mehta (2013) have identified a “more central role of educational institutions in society: in an increasingly knowledge-dependent economy, schools and colleges take on a more central role in society’s institutional fabric, and their performance has definite repercussions throughout society.” (Meyer & Rowan, 2006; p. 2). However, as Boyd and Crowson (2002) point out, public K-12 education has always been under scrutiny and the roots of current debates around schools go back to conversations before *A Nation at Risk*.

Of particular importance for this study are the increasingly active role of national- and state-level policies and policymakers (Fusarelli, 2002; Mehta, 2013; Meyer & Rowan, 2006), the decreasing legitimacy of (traditional) public schools in the eyes of the public (Boyd & Crowson, 2002), and the rise of school choice, especially in the form of charter schools (Merz & Furman, 1997; NCES, 2015; Powers, 2009). The first development has led to a tighter coupling of U.S. K-12 public education as argued by several scholars (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Diamond, 2012; Firestone, 2009; Fusarelli, 2002; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Mehta, 2013; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Pollock & Winton, 2012; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002), meaning more centralized power at the federal and state levels and less free decision-making at the district and school levels, potentially leading to more similarity across schools. The increased struggle for legitimacy that TPSs face could lead to a greater concern for these schools with public opinion and desires. The last of these three developments, on the other hand, introduced

more diversity into the K-12 education system as charter schools generally have more freedom with regards to the policies governing schools and often are smaller, more specialized schools (Fox & Wolf, 2015; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011). The interaction of these changes in the U.S. education system and their potential effect on the content of high school guiding statements in Arizona is what is of interest for the given study.

Tighter coupling: The increasing influence of national and state-level policy on schools. The greater influence of federal and state-level policy on individual schools, or the tightening of loosely coupled systems, has been noted by scholars as a major part of a larger policy paradigm change (Fusarelli, 2002; Mazzoni, 1995; Mehta, 2013; Powers, 2009). The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) program under the Bush administration and *Race to the Top* (RTTT) under the Obama administration are examples for the increasing influence of the federal government in public K-12 education. In 2002, when NCLB had just been enacted, Fusarelli emphasized the systematic nature of the reform movement and the increasingly active role of policymakers at the national and state levels:

State and national policymakers are increasingly important actors in shaping the nature, scope, and direction of education initiatives (Mazzoni, 1995; Sroufe, 1995). Systemic reform initiatives include school report cards, indices of program and school quality, expanded use of student test scores (including disaggregation of data to the student level), and outcomes-based accreditation strategies and curriculum frameworks. (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 562)

These centralizing reform initiatives, the introduction of school choice legislation, and the overall narrative of failing schools since *A Nation at Risk* with the resulting emphasis on accountability have led to traditional public schools having to react to a variety of new policies and public opinions (Powers, 2009; Thomson, 2008). In many ways, these changes have, as discussed in the theoretical framework section, led to a tighter coupling of the U.S. K-12 education system.

Charter schools. The introduction of charter schools is to some extent a consequence of the overarching narrative of underperforming schools (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015; Hursh, 2007; Powers, 2009). At the same time, the introduction of charter schools appears to contradict to some extent the general assessment of increasing influence of national and state-level policy as it led to more decentralized, localized education systems in some settings. Therefore, not all changes of the last decades are necessarily evidence for the increasing influence of national- and state-level policy(makers). In order to understand how charter schools fit into these larger policy changes and why their guiding statements may differ from those of TPSs, it is important to take a brief look their origin and development. In the next section, I will also review charter school characteristics relevant to this study's focus on community as well as the situation of charter schools in Arizona, providing the policy and research context for this study.

Charter school history and development. Charter schools are named for the charter they have to receive from public institutions such as school boards, universities, or the state board of education in order to operate (Roch & Sai, 2015). Introduced in the

early 1990s, charter schools “seemed to hold the promise of school improvement” and “were seen as an alternative to the failing traditional public schools” (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015, p. 7). Just like TPSs, not all charter schools are the same as a result of the variety of charter school legislation and policies across states - although underlying patterns are the same according to Pelz (2015). This diversity limits the availability of generalizable findings (Ertas, 2013).

What is undisputable is that the number of charter schools and their enrollment have increased rapidly, particularly in the new millennium, with 6.6 percent of K-12 students in the United States enrolled in charter schools in the 2013-2014 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a). Moreover, there are now more and more charter schools with large enrollment, meaning many of the individual schools have grown in size as well (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). While 6.6 per cent is still a small portion of U.S. students, charter schools have gained a lot of attention, both in the public and in academia. Scholars have studied the effects that they have had on American education at the K-12 level and arguments and disagreements concerning charter schools are plentiful among scholars, advocacy groups, and the general public (Henig, 2009; Kirst, 2007; Reckhow, Grossmann, & Evans, 2015): “the charter school movement has been politically charged for both its proponents and opponents” (Frankenberg & Lee 2003, p. 7).

From the beginning, the need for checks and balances for market forces in the education system has been emphasized (Etzioni, 1992). In 1992, Cobb expressed his desire to “avoid a common gap in education analysis, which often conveys the sense that

schools are divorced from the labor market and other economic realities” (p. xv). Given the current policy context described above, this statement seems antiquated a little more than 20 years later. Checks and balances for charter schools exists, but “state laws and regulations governing charter schools vary widely” (Gawlik, 2008, p. 798), and charter schools are generally viewed as less regulated than TPSs (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Gawlik, 2008; Grady, 2012).

Charter schools and communities. In this section, I briefly outline characteristics of charter schools which support the idea of charter schools creating communities within their schools that are often different from those of TPSs. First, charter schools do not operate, like most TPSs historically have (even given desegregation efforts, magnet schools, and other schools and policies blurring the idea of schools serving specific zip codes, i.e. geographical areas), with a given community of parents and students. Instead, the focus is on individual (student or parent) choice as students are not assigned to charter schools, but can select them as an alternative to a TPS (Lubienski, 2013, p. 500). In fact, 46 states have adopted open enrollment policies for all public schools, “which allow a student to transfer to a public school of his or her choice” (Education Commission of the States, 2015), indicating pressures on TPS to change their traditional ways of operating, which may also affect their guiding statements.

As Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, and Wang (2011) note, the introduction of charter schools (along with school desegregation efforts) has changed the geographical correlation between the limits of neighborhoods and communities served by schools:

Because school choice disrupts a common reliance upon neighborhood school zones (which often means that patterns of residential segregation are replicated in school populations), it provides a mechanism for attracting a student body from a much larger, and often more diverse, geographic area. (p. 5)

This loosening of traditional geographic boundaries with regards to a school's community (both inside and outside of the school) and the diversification of schools' student bodies - particular those of charter schools – are likely to impact how high schools frame community in their guiding statements.

Researchers have argued since the beginning of charter schools' existence in the United States about whether they promote stratification along the lines of socioeconomic status, ethnicity/race, religion, or other demographic factors (cf. Carlson & Cowen, 2015a; Cobb, 1998; Wei, Patel, & Young, 2014). Some scholars argue that “parents, particularly those with resources, typically choose schools for reasons of religion, culture, and social similarity rather than academic quality” (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2001, p. 575) and many studies indeed suggest that charter schools are selective in who they admit (Lubienski, 2013; Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Miron, Urschel, Mathis, & Tornquist, 2010). Others, however, claim that this has changed today or has never been a commonplace occurrence (Carlson, 2014; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000; Frankenberg & Lee, 2003).

Either way, charter schools, like TPSs, necessarily have relationships with the communities they serve and the ones they are located in. However, these relationships are still understudied. Berry and Howell (2005) point out that charter schools' contracts with

authorizers often do not mention the general public, thus effectively allowing charter schools to ignore those outside of the school community. Similarly, Ford and Ihrke (2015) found that “traditional public school board members do place a greater emphasis on interactions with the public, including interest groups, than charter school board members” (p 410). Particularly charter management organizations seem to have moved away from the early focus of the charter school movement on community (parent and teacher) involvement in the school’s decision-making processes (Dowell & Bickmore, 2015). These findings suggest that there are differences between charter schools and TPSs in their interactions with and approaches to the community outside of the school which may be reflected in school guiding statements.

Further support for differences in interactions with the community outside of the school comes from Lubienski (2013), who contends that “charter schools naturally locate in the neighbourhoods they aspire to serve” (p. 506), having conducted geo-spatial analyses which suggest that many charter schools, particularly those managed by for-profit companies, avoid high-need areas (Lubienski, Gulosino, & Weitzel, 2009). He concludes that “rather than simply reflecting consumer preferences, marketisation gives charter schools – and schools competing with them – incentives to place different values on students, and pursue them accordingly” (Lubienski, 2013, p. 506). These findings, which are echoed by others (Gulosino & d’Entremont, 2011), indicate that charter schools typically have a high amount of control over the selection of their location and their students, which this study will suggested is be reflected in their understanding of community as expressed in their guiding statements.

Given these findings, charter schools appear to define communities they serve both spatially and with regards to values, which should be reflected in charter school discourse (which includes guiding statements). Given their rapid rise, charter schools could be expected to influence the discourses of all K-12 schools, thus impacting the values, goals, and discourses of administrators/leaders and teachers in TPSs. While Linick and Lubienski (2013) find that the impact of charter schools on their competitors (i.e., TPSs) is limited with regards to the improvements originally targeted by the introduction of choice/charter schools, such changes in values and discourse could be one of the effects that can be detected and showcase the magnitude of the influence that charter schools have had on the U.S. education system.

However, it is important to remember that just as there are different types of TPS, there is diversity within the large pool of charter schools (Fox & Wolf, 2015; Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Krop & Zimmer, 2005; Powers, 2009), both across and within states. There are schools with small and large enrollment, those operated by large, for-profit management companies, those operated by individuals who only hold one charter, and those started by community groups, those with high student achievement and those with low student achievement. These variations make it difficult to compare charter schools and TPSs in general, even at the state or city/school district level.

Charter schools in Arizona. Due to the diversity of state policies regarding charter schools, it is necessary to briefly examine the local context in Arizona, particularly with regards to school-community relationships. The percentage of charter schools in Arizona is high (see Figure 3) and Arizona is “a leader in the national school

choice movement” (Powers, Topper, & Silver, 2012; see also Garcia, 2008). Arizona’s charter law defines charter schools as “public schools that serve as alternatives to traditional public schools” and “provide additional academic choices for parents and pupils” (Arizona State Legislature, 2017a). Charter schools receive a relatively large degree of autonomy and exemption from regulations applying to TPSs (Pelz, 2015) while also requiring accountability measures: “Arizona’s law does not have a cap on charter public school growth, allows multiple authorizing entities, and provides a fair amount of autonomy and accountability to its charter schools” (National Alliance for Charter Schools, 2017, p. 14). Relationships with the community outside of the school are not governed explicitly, which fits into the overall assessment of Arizona charter school legislation providing charter schools with a relatively high degree of independence.

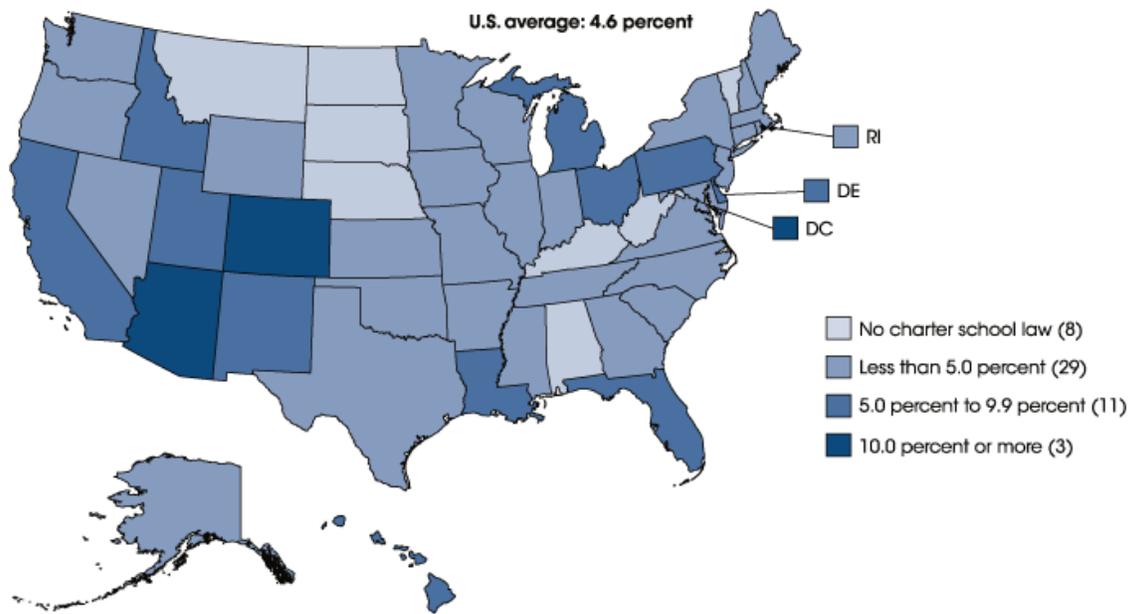


Figure 3: Percentage of all public school students enrolled in public charter schools, by state: School year 2012–13 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

The relationship between schools and local communities in Arizona is affected by a variety of factors. First, potential locations for charter schools are relatively unrestricted: charter schools can be established at any location or in a facility for which the zoning regulations of the county or municipality cannot legally prohibit schools operated by school districts, though a county or municipality may adopt zoning regulations that prohibit a charter school from operating on property that is less than an acre in size and that is located within an existing single-family residence zoning district (Arizona State Legislature, 2017b). Combined with policies that allow interdistrict open enrollment (which also applies to TPSs), this policy context has led to high mobility of students in Arizona. However, this mobility can vary significantly depending on district and location (Powers, Topper, & Silver, 2012), highlighting the need to acknowledge the diversity of local contexts across the state of Arizona.

In addition, Arizona is “unique in allowing charter schools to operate for 15 years before coming up for review” (Chingos & West, 2015, p. 131S; see also Garcia, 2008). Therefore, most charter schools have not come up for review yet. This in turn suggests that charter schools’ approaches to K-12 education in Arizona had a relatively long time to be developed and promoted, including (potentially alternative) definitions of and approaches to community. At the same time, it means that charter school guiding statements were created relatively recently, and it may be the case for many charter schools in Arizona that their guiding statements have not changed since their establishment. Therefore, when analyzing Arizona high school guiding statements, it is important to keep in mind that these statements are potentially created in relative

autonomy from state authorities and local communities, which may lead to differences between charter schools and TPSs.

School Guiding Statements

Guiding statements in education are omnipresent and widely regarded as necessary. As Allen (2001) put it, “[i]t seems that everyone agrees that school communities should have some sort of covenant, vision, mission, philosophy, or values to guide their work” (p. 290). The role of guiding statements as communicating the core goals and purpose of an organization typically leads to a heavy focus on values (Blake, 2011). As such, guiding statements are texts that are public and visible (at least more so than other discourses or texts within education) and that are meant to lead and legitimize the organization (Morphew & Hartley, 2006).

Guiding statements here are defined as both mission and vision statements (and other documents potentially accomplishing the function of these statements) of high schools (Allen, 2001; Brockett, 2014). Technically defined differently, mission and vision statements in practice often feature overlapping or even indistinguishable content (Bishop, 2007; Brockett, 2014). They both “communicate the core purpose of an organization to both internal and external communities” (Brockett, 2014, p. 2). While the importance of guiding statements for successful school leadership and development has been emphasized, their content “remains one of the least well-specified components” (Murphy & Torre, 2015, p. 177). Nonetheless, guiding statements can provide a solid foundation for the comparison conducted here between TPSs and charter schools:

As nearly all American schools have one, the mission statement provides a common measure allowing for systematic comparison across diverse institutions. [Moreover] school mission statements tend to be publicly available and easily accessible, making them well suited for study, particularly in the age of online data collection. (Stemler et al., 2011, p. 391)

As the following literature review shows, high school guiding statements remain understudied. Few studies were explicitly comparative in nature, and none focused on a comparison of TPSs and charter schools or the ways in which communities are constructed in them. The literature on guiding statements typically focuses on mission statements – rather than using the term guiding statements – and is still relatively limited, particularly with regards to empirical research (Brockett, 2014; Stemler et al., 2011), and very few of these studies focus on K-12 education. Apart from Bishop (2007) and Ausbrooks, Barrett, and Daniel (2005), no studies have focused on charter schools. There are still many questions about K-12 guiding statements, particularly about their process of creation, their variation, and their effects (what type of influence do they have on whom?). In the following section, I review the development of guiding statements in education and findings regarding their content, variation, creation, and effects.

Content. A common criticism of research on guiding statements is that their content is meaningless and of little value for schools, audiences, and researchers as they are too general or vague (Allen, 2001; also see Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Stemler et al., 2011). Others, however, see them as a valuable source of data that reflects the values and goals of educational leadership (Perfetto et al., 2013; Schafft & Biddle, 2013, Stemler et

al., 2011) and thus, convinced of the validity of their findings, have conducted empirical research. They argue that “school mission statements can be reliably coded and that meaningful and systematic differences in their content can be empirically captured and quantified” (Stemler et al., 2011, p. 411). A relatively small number of studies (Bishop, 2007; Blake, 2011; Boerema, 2006; Murphy & Torre, 2015; Perfetto et al., 2013; Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999) has examined the content of schools’ guiding statements and found essentially the same: Themes can be identified, but the question is whether they differ between schools in meaningful ways and, with regards to the current study, whether any existing differences can be attributed to differences in coupling between TPSs and charter schools.

One theme featured in school guiding statements is community. Given the fuzziness of the concept, different types of communities are referenced in different ways and frequencies, but can generally be grouped into two larger categories: community involvement/development (Bishop, 2007; Blake, 2011; Boerema, 2006; Brockett, 2014; Davis, Ruhe, Lee, & Rajadhyaksha, 2006 for higher education; Orozco, 2012; Schaftt & Biddle for school districts; Stemler & Bebell, 1999, who included postsecondary institutions in their sample; Stemler et al., 2011; Stewart, 1999; Weiss & Piderit, 1999) and the goal of working toward establishing or strengthening the community of the school itself and/or learning communities within it (Bishop, 2007; Blake 2011; Boerema, 2006; Brockett, 2014; Morphey & Hartley for higher education; Saley. 2006; Stewart, 1999). However, these findings are largely by-products of the analyses of these studies, not in the focus of the research questions. For example, Perfetto, Holland, Davis, and

Fedynich (2013) report having found the general concept of community as fourth-most frequent of the 31 major themes they identified their sample of high schools in Texas, but do not elaborate in any detail on this finding, their coding, or different uses of the concept (similarly, Stemler et al. 2011).

Variation. Education-specific research suggests that variation can be found by type of institution (public, private, parochial, charter) (Boerema, 2006; Hannaway & Abramowitz, 1985; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Orozco, 2009; Perfetto et al., 2013; Saley; 2006; Stemler et al., 2011). Focusing on charter schools, Ausbrooks et al. (2005) report strong variation between charter school mission statements in Texas, describing each school as unique. However, other studies show little variation and instead suggest evidence of copying, borrowing, or reliance on a small number of common guiding documents or sources (Bishop, 2007; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Schafft and Biddle (2013), in an analysis of school district mission statements in Pennsylvania, note “[s]trikingly uniform use of language and themes across multiple district contexts” and conclude that “(a) district mission statements may not be representative of locally articulated visions of schooling and (b) the influences of local context may be superseded by broader institutional discourses regarding the purposes of education and schooling” (p. 55). The latter, even smaller set of empirical findings seems to directly contradict those who observed that geopolitical context and other factors cause variation in guiding statements and support the claims made by Allen (2001) about the genericness of school guiding statements. Stemler et al. (2011) suggest that more recent educational reforms on both the federal and state levels, such as NCLB, may contribute to the standardization of school

mission statements, thus providing evidence for tighter coupling of U.S. K-12 education. So far, the low number of studies and often limited sample sizes, as well as different units of analysis (school districts, high schools, institutions of higher education), complicate our understanding of variables influencing the content of guiding statements in education. Nonetheless, it appears possible to assume that an analysis of charter schools could lead to findings indicating inter-group and intra-group variation.

Creation. Just like other elements of guiding statements, the process of their creation is understudied, which causes concerns about the validity of the interpretation of their content and effects (Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Recent scholarship is limited to speculation about the processes at work based on very limited empirical evidence, often relying simply on what has been claimed by others or reported in research on businesses or colleges (Perfetto et al., 2013). What is certain is that the creation process is dependent on local context due to varying regulations across states (Weiss & Piderit, 1999) and that “there are some processes and structures that organizations must incorporate because they are normatively prescribed” (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 458). Weiss and Piderit (1999) point to a “wildfire spread of legal requirements for mission statements” (p. 195) that occurred in the 1990s. Already then, Arizona was one of the states mandating “all state agencies to write mission statements as part of the budget or strategic planning process” (p. 195), a requirement that can also be seen as part of a process of legitimization (Ayers, 2015).

Despite these state-level requirements, guiding statements are frequently portrayed or thought of as representing or being influenced by community discourse and

needs (Bishop, 2007), under the assumption that “educators and educational leaders must remain cognizant of and responsive to local needs and issues, because schools are run by locally elected school boards and occupy the nexus of their communities’ educational, social, and economic activity” (Schafft & Biddle, 2013, p. 55). However, there is little to no research that supports this idea: In their study of school districts in Pennsylvania, Schafft and Biddle (2013) found that mission statements did not appear to represent local voices and rather seemed to be “superseded by broader institutional discourses regarding the purposes of education and schooling” (p. 55), an influence that Stemler et al. (2011) acknowledge as well.

The existing body of research on who writes guiding statements suggests that both school-internal and -external stakeholders are involved in their creation (cf. Bishop, 2007; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Murphy & Torre, 2015; Stemler et al, 2011). Therefore, the processes through which guiding statements are created should be influenced by members of the community/ies that a given school serves. Murphy and Torre (2015) cite evidence for the principal as the key figure in the creation of guiding statements, but emphasize that principals initiate and guide, rather than impose, the creation of guiding statements. In her small-sample study of Catholic elementary schools, Stewart (1999) suggests that there are two possible groups of writers: multiple stakeholders within a school or the main school administrator. The results of her interviews show that even school administrators “had no general awareness of how the mission statement was developed” (p. vi). Other studies assume that those in school leadership positions create the guiding statements, but do not provide evidence for this

assumption (Bishop, 2007). Stronger evidence for the idea of a co-construction of guiding statements is provided by Stemler et al. (2011): interviewed school principals reported “a collaborative process involving many authors within the school community” (p. 413). This process, Stemler et al. (2011) claim, makes guiding statements “a product of the immediate school community” (p. 413), which they argue consists of students, teachers, administrators, parents, as well as the local community, a group of people they do not define in more detail. Similarly, Murphy and Torre review a variety of studies on the creation of school goals, noting the involvement of principals as well as teachers and community stakeholders. Again, it appears that findings between individual studies are contradictory and suggest evidence for both loose and tight coupling. Some studies stress that guiding statement creation is very much a result of processes at the school and community level that are relatively independent from federal or state education departments while others report little evidence for such local adaptations, thus suggesting tighter coupling to the mentioned institutions.

Somewhat surprisingly, few studies have looked in detail at policies requiring schools to write guiding statements or influencing the content of these statements. The majority of the literature on the topic, if discussing their creation at all, tends to focus on school-internal influences on the process of creation. Bishop’s (2007) and Stemler and Bebell’s work (2011; 2012) works present an exception to this. These researchers hypothesize, based on their findings, that guiding statements undergo relatively frequent revisions, both to satisfy the requirements imposed on schools and to reflect community

values and needs, thus acknowledging the influence of regulations or discourses at the district or state-level on the creation and thus content of guiding statements.

To summarize: high school guiding statements generally remain understudied, particularly with regards to their creation. Few studies were explicitly comparative in nature, and none focused on a comparison of TPSs and charter schools or the ways in which the notion of community is framed in them. None of the research on guiding statements above has been conducted in Arizona, and none of the existing studies have worked with large samples or tried to study all (public) schools in a state. The studies that did feature comparative analyses of guiding statements' variation by school type (i.e., traditional public, charter, private, etc.), or at least considered school type as a potential factor often featured inconclusive or limited findings. These studies' results also often contradict each other in their responses to the question of whether the content of guiding statements varies by school type (i.e., TPS, private, parochial, charter, etc.). Moreover, several studies have limitations in sampling procedures and sample size, which may have caused some of the apparent contradictions in the literature. The current study thus will help address various gaps in the educational literature on school guiding statements. At the same time, it appears possible to study guiding statements in systematic ways and derive reliable findings from them.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This study relies on two primary types of data: First, the guiding statements from high schools in Arizona; second, interviews with school principals/leaders. In addition to this data, policy documents were collected to support the analysis. The given study is a content analysis employing predominantly qualitative methods supported by basic descriptive statistics. Specifically, I created an exploratory study that employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative content analysis to analyze the guiding statements and qualitative content analysis for the interviews. In this section, I first describe the study's instruments and collected data, data collection and sampling procedures for the guiding statements, interviews, and policy documents, discuss the data analysis, and finally review validity, generalizability, as well as the limitations of the methodology.

Instruments and Collected Data

Three types of data were collected for this study: 1. The school guiding statements from all high schools in Arizona, through school websites and publicly available data bases. 2. Semi-structured Interviews with school leaders from high schools in Arizona, which were conducted via phone and Skype (see Appendix A for interview questions). 3. Policy documents from the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona School Boards Association, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, and AdvancED, a major accrediting agency for high schools in Arizona and the United States in general.

In addition to collecting and analyzing these statements, interviews with high school leaders were conducted in order to obtain their views on the guiding statements

and their interpretation of the given school's approach to community. The interviews provide access to the understanding of the framing of community by the leaders of schools which did not mention community in their guiding statements. The school leaders' accounts contribute the perspectives of people knowledgeable about the process of guiding statement creation as well as the local policy context.

A final type of data collected in this study are the policies and regulations governing the creation of school guiding statements. This data enables the analysis to confirm what prior studies had often just assumed or only incompletely researched about these documents by providing a more detailed understanding of the context in which the documents are created. While the interviews provided insights on these processes from the perspective of the school principals/leaders, the policy documents collected from the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona School Boards Association, the Arizona School Boards Association, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, and AdvanceEd were necessary to complete the policy context as they explained in detail the policy requirements for school leaders regarding mission and vision statements. As Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013, p. 401) point out,

Every analysis requires a context within which the available texts are examined.

The researcher must construct a world in which the texts make sense allowing them to answer research questions (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher, who has a broader understanding of the context influencing the stories of the study participants, may develop a wider understanding of what is going on, in addition

to the understanding that she or he may share with those participating in the research (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

More specifically, the policy documents and interviews collected provided a much clearer picture of how policies and external agencies influence the content and creation process of guiding statements and thus ultimately how tightly coupled high school guiding statements in Arizona are. All three types of data together allow first of all for an exploration of the question of how high schools in Arizona frame the notion of community. The comparison of these frames for community between TPSs and charter schools, through the lens of coupling theory, provides insights that point to isomorphism and could also suggest how potential concerns about legitimacy may influence school's framings of community.

Data Collection and Sampling Procedures

Guiding statements. For this study, guiding statements were operationalized as mission and vision statements, including statements of purpose as well as school philosophy and goals when presented publicly as part of the school's guiding documents. The goal at the outset was to sample the whole population of high schools serving grades 9-12 in Arizona, but the final sample of 360 high school guiding statements considered for this study was the product of inclusion criteria and the unavailability of a small number of guiding statements. To collect the guiding statements, a list of all high schools in Arizona was obtained, using "Find a School" search function on the Arizona Department of Education's website (Arizona Department of Education, 2014), selecting the option "K-12 Schools – INCLUDING Charter Schools." From this, "all counties" was

selected and then all schools serving grades 9-12. This selection means that high schools, for the purposes of this study, are defined as school serving grades 9-12. Schools not serving all four of these grades were excluded, but schools serving grades below 9 in addition to 9-12 were considered. Two additional lists were created using the same search criteria, except for the first list “Charter Schools” were selected and for the second one “K-12 Schools NOT INCLUDING Charter Schools.” The lists were then checked against each other to ensure a clean dataset (Davis, 2012). In two instances, charter schools were operated by public school districts. These two schools were included on the list of traditional public schools as they are part of a traditional school district.

Having compiled a list of all public schools serving grades 9-12 in Arizona, i.e. an approximation if not the actual population of high schools in the state of Arizona, the next step was to clean the dataset using the most recently available (2014-15 school year) NCES school-level data (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016b). High schools were defined for the purposes of this study as all “regular schools” as categorized by the NCES serving grades 9-12. The following types of schools were excluded from the dataset based on Bishop (2007) to create a clean dataset that can serve as a foundation for reliable findings: a) alternative schools, b) online/distance learning schools, c) schools focused on credit recovery/individualized or small group learning for remedial purposes, d) special education schools, e) schools part of the prison education system, f) gifted or vocational programs hosted by high schools, but categorized as separate entities by the NCES, g) schools that had not opened yet, h) schools that did not have student enrolled in all four grades (9-12) in the 2016-2017 school year, and i) schools that had closed

between 2014-15 and the 2016-17 school year. By avoiding schools with relatively narrow educational purposes and student populations, who are often unique in their approach, the dataset is focused on public high schools catering toward the general student population. Schools with a specific, specialized purpose possibly focus on this purpose in their mission and vision (cf. Boerema, 2006). They might also be likely to define community, both in terms of the school community and who they serve, in ways that would be limited by this specific purpose.

Neither the NCES data nor the ADE data was complete and included schools that had closed or not opened yet, so that schools had to be added and removed and information had to be verified through additional research on school websites. At the end of the data cleaning process, 360 schools (215 traditional public schools and 145 charter schools) remained and thus composed the data set for this study. In the next step, the guiding statements of all schools in these two lists were collected using the Arizona Department of Education's "Find a School" searchable database (Arizona Department of Education, 2014) and Arizona school report card system (Arizona Department of Education, 2016a) which both list the guiding statements for some schools. There were no systematic discrepancies between the school websites on the one hand and the two databases maintained by the Arizona Department of Education, but the guiding statements were not listed for many schools in these two databases. Therefore, guiding statements were primarily obtained through the school websites and available guiding statement information from the School Report Cards was only added to the dataset when no guiding statement could be found on the school's website. Another reason for the

focus on the school website is that school websites may be updated more frequently than the ADE databases. Support for this assumption came from the Arizona Department of Education about regulations regarding guiding statements, who confirmed that there is no central database in which school guiding statements are regularly collected and that the school report card system is the closest to a readily available database for guiding statements, relying on information supplied by the schools. Further, by collecting the guiding statements from the website, the data collection was “unobtrusive and non-reactive” (Webb et al., 2000).

Guiding statements could be obtained for the vast majority of the 215 TPSs and 145 charter schools through school websites, the Arizona School Report Cards and the “Find a School” database. In a few cases, no mission or vision statement was available through these two data collection methods so the schools for which this was the case were contacted directly via email. This made it possible to bring the number of missing guiding statements down to four TPSs and one charter school, which were then excluded from the dataset. The final dataset thus included 211 TPSs and 144 charter schools with guiding statements.

Interviews. As already stated above, the interviews were conducted to allow for more comprehensive answers to the study’s research questions, providing another perspective on the findings of the analysis of the guiding statements. School leaders are major actors in the creation of guiding statements (Murphy & Torre, 2015; Stemler et al., 2011; Stewart, 1999) and are responsive to changes in the policy environment (Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). Moreover, for guiding statements did not reference the notion of

community directly, the interviews provided an insight into how these schools framed the notion of community from the perspective of a school leader.

While the attempted sampling was purposeful based on the content of the guiding statements, additional criteria were considered for selecting these schools, thus introducing stratification to the sampling process: Their location within the state and their school locale. The goal was not a completely representative sample of schools regarding their location or locale, but rather to avoid that schools were primarily from one particular area of the state of Arizona or that, for example, rural schools would be over- or underrepresented in the sample (cf. Stemler et al., 2011). This step was taken because the notion of community is a concept traditionally defined geographically and always includes the ideas of social closeness and distance (Adams et al., 2014; Arthur, 2003; Keller, 2003), which are likely to differ between cities and suburban areas on the one hand and towns and rural areas on the other hand (Bauch, 2001, Collins & Flaxman, 2001; Tieken, 2001).

This purposeful, stratified sampling method then turned into a convenience sample with purposeful elements (see Table 1): As I will explain in more detail in the following, the two factors considered in creating a sample of 160 schools to contact for interviews were whether or not a given school's guiding statement included the word "community" as well as school locale. The choice of the number of 160 schools, of which 80 each were TPSs and charter schools, was made with the target of a final sample with approximately equal numbers of interviews with TPSs and charter school leaders that would allow for saturation. A response rate of 20-25 percent (32-40 interviews) was

targeted as the goal was to obtain about 20 interviews from both groups of school leaders, a randomly chosen round number that lies above numbers such as 12 that have been suggested as creating saturation in qualitative studies (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). A higher number than 12 thus seemed desirable to ensure saturation.

Table 1:
Attempted Sampling for Interviews & Interviews Actually Conducted

	TPSs	Charter Schools	Total
Contacted schools:			
“Community” included in guiding statement(s)	40	40	40
“Community” not included in guiding statements	40	40	40
Total	80	80	80
Successfully completed interviews	12	14	26

As mentioned above, the goal was not to create a fully representative sample of high school leaders in Arizona, but rather to stratify the sampling with regards to the inclusion of the term community and school locale. However, the response rate ultimately dictated the composition of the final sample. As the following discussion will show, this meant that the final sample of interviewed school leaders was not stratified according to school locale and inclusion of the word “community,” but was simply a product of the response rate. Ultimately, 24 interviews were conducted successfully, 12 with TPS school leaders and 14 with charter school leaders (Table 1), thus reaching saturation.

To elaborate on the sampling procedures: The first step was an initial, basic coding of the guiding statements (see Table 2), putting schools into two large categories: those whose guiding statements included the word “community” and second those whose guiding statements did not include the word “community.” The first category featured two sub-categories: First, guiding statements in which “community” was addressed referring to community outside the school and second, guiding statements in which

community referred to community inside the school. The four cases (all TPSs) in which guiding statements featured both conceptualizations of community were added to the first sub-category for the purposes of sampling.

Table 2:
Preliminary Coding

	TPSs	Charter Schools	Total
No guiding statement available	4 (1.9%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (1.7%)
"Community" not included in guiding statements	105 (48.8%)	72 (49.7%)	177 (48.9%)
"Community" included in guiding statement(s)	106 (49.3%)	72 (49.7%)	178 (49.4%)
of which "community" = outside the school	72 (67.9%)	58 (80.6%)	130 (73.0%)
of which "community" = ONLY inside the school	34 (32.1%)	14 (19.4%)	48 (27.0%)
of which "community" = inside AND outside the school	47 (44.3%)	30 (41.7%)	77 (43.3%)
Total	215	145	360

Note: "of which" = percentage of total number of schools that included "community in their guiding statements. Values for "outside the school" and "inside the school" are mutually exclusive categories that add up to 100 percent because "ONLY inside the school" captures all schools that only referred to a community inside the school. The category "inside AND outside the school" lists schools whose guiding statements framed community as applying to both inside and outside of the school.

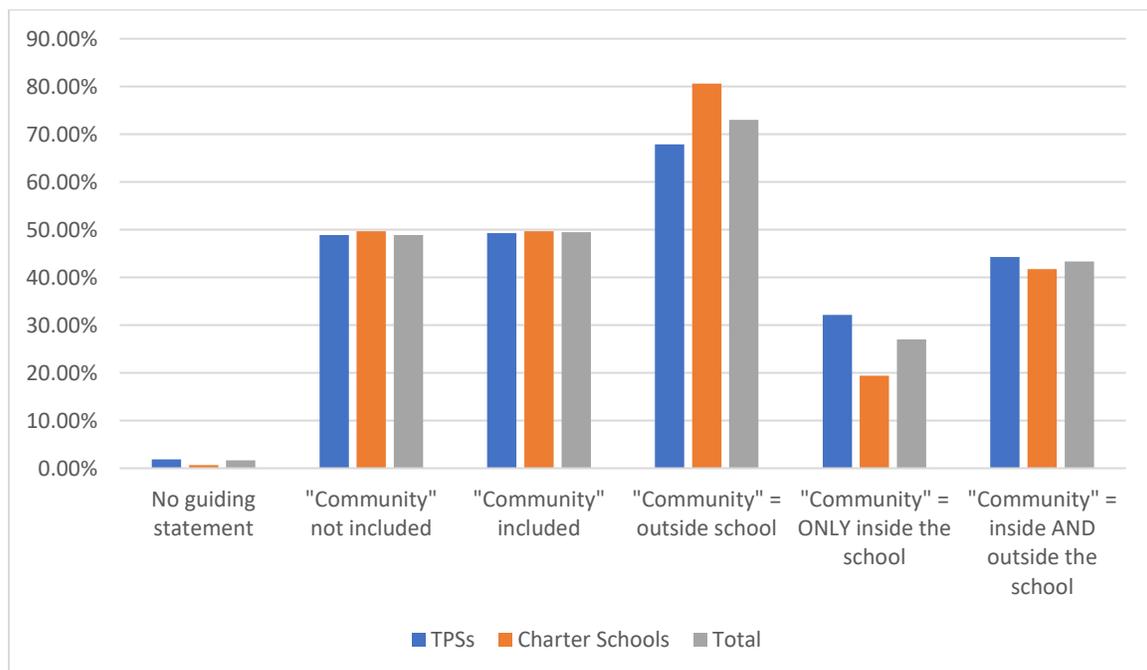


Figure 4: Preliminary coding.

As mentioned above a total of 160 schools was contacted for interviews, 80 TPSs and 80 charter schools (see Table 1). Within each group of 80, 40 schools were selected

whose guiding statements included the word “community” and 40 whose guiding statements did not include the word “community.” As can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 4, the word community was included in almost half of the guiding statements, with similar numbers for TPSs and charter schools. Therefore, the number of schools featuring the word “community” in their guiding statement was the same as the number of schools whose guiding statements did not include the term. Of the schools with guiding statements that included the word “community,” only schools whose guiding statements referred to community within the school were selected. An example for a definition of community inside a school is a learning community within the school, such as “The mission of Catalina Foothills High School, as a collaborative learning community committed to excellence...” An example for community outside of the school, on the other hand, is “Through community, parent, teacher, and student partnership, it is the mission of Grand Canyon Prep to...” About one in five schools’ guiding statements featured both of these frames of community (“inside AND outside the school” in Table 2 and Figure 4), and 15.8 percent of TPS and 9.7 percent of charter school guiding statements only included a framing of community as a learning/educational community inside the school (“ONLY inside the school” in Table 2 and Figure 4).

For the purposeful sampling regarding location, it was ensured that there was a balance between Arizona’s two metropolitan areas, Phoenix and Tucson, as well as a representation of all other cities and areas of the state. In an effort to keep all schools anonymous, a breakdown of the data by location cannot be provided as it would be relatively easy to identify school by location. School locale was taken from the National

Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) classification: city, suburban, town, and rural (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016c).

The data in Table 3 and Figures 5-7 shows that within the final dataset of 215 high schools, the majority of charter schools is located in City locales, the share (62.8%) being almost twice as large as for TPSs (32.1%). On the other hand, much higher shares of TPSs are located in Town and Rural locales (19.3% and 25.7%) when compared to charter schools (7.7% and 7.1%). The large number of charter schools with the school locale “City” is due to the high concentration of charter schools in the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas.

Table 3:
School Locale Breakdown

School Locale	Dataset		Contacted Schools		Interviews	
	TPSs	Charter Schools	TPSs	Charter Schools	TPSs	Charter Schools
City	70 (32.1%)	98 (62.8%)	25 (31.3%)	48 (60.0%)	2 (16.7%)	9 (64.3%)
Suburban	50 (22.9%)	35 (22.4%)	20 (25.0%)	19 (23.8%)	3 (25.0%)	3 (21.4%)
Town	42 (19.3%)	12 (7.7%)	16 (20.0%)	8 (10.0%)	5 (41.7%)	2 (14.3%)
Rural	56 (25.7%)	11 (7.1%)	19 (23.8%)	5 (6.3%)	2 (16.7%)	-
Total	215	145	80	80	12	14

An attempt was made to roughly match the representation of school locales found in the complete dataset (Figure 5) when contacting the schools for interviews (Figure 6). Given the relatively small number of 26 interviews, it is not surprising that the locale distribution of the schools whose leaders were interviewed does not match the locale distribution of the complete dataset: almost two out of three charter school leaders that were interviewed were from schools with the locale City, while more than half (seven out of 12) TPSs were from Town or Rural locales (Figure 7).

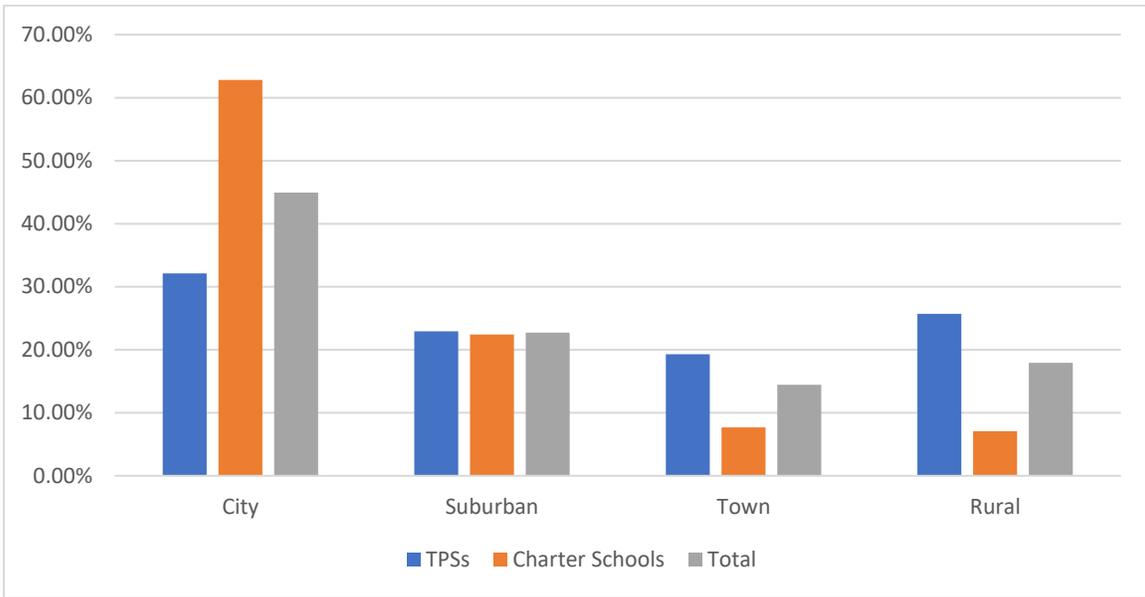


Figure 5. School locale breakdown (dataset of high schools).

Note: Percentages in each group (TPS, Charter Schools, Total) are based on the total number of schools in each group).

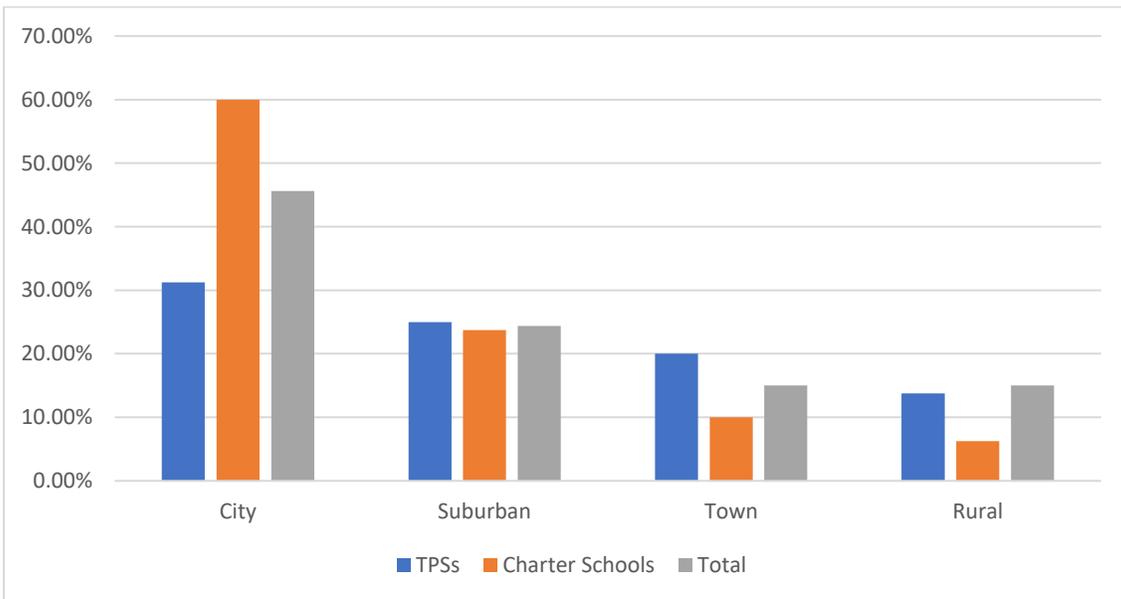


Figure 6. School locale breakdown (contacted schools).

Note: Percentages in each group (TPS, Charter Schools, and Total) are based on the total number of schools in each group).

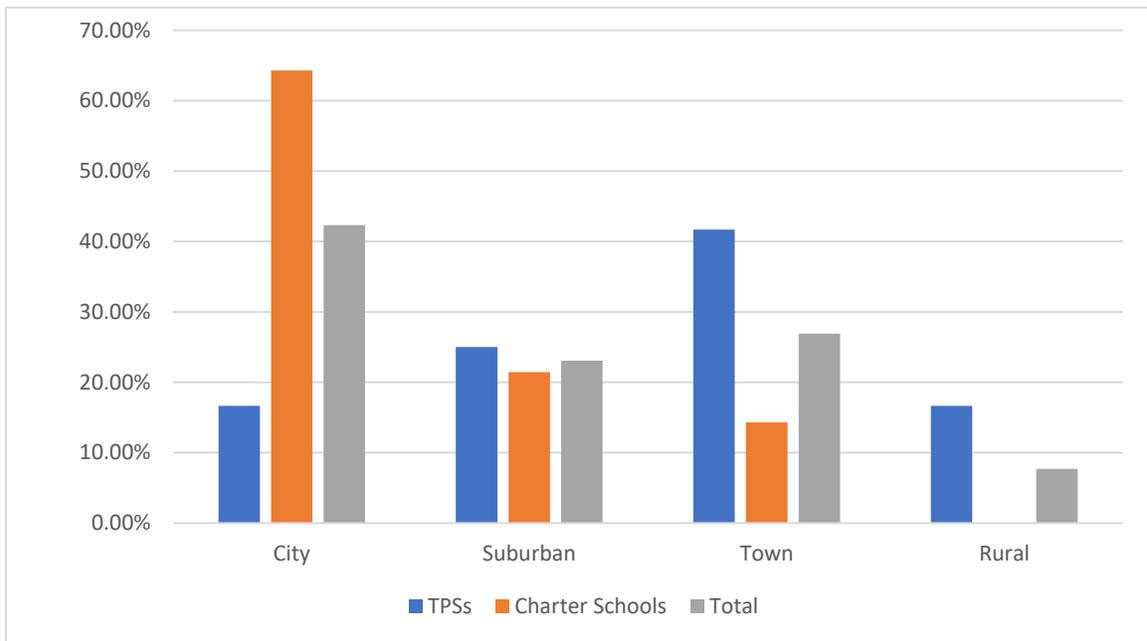


Figure 7: School locale breakdown (interviews).

Note: Percentages based on total number of interviews (TPS = 12; Charter = 14; Total = 26).

The school leaders of the 160 schools that had been selected were contacted via email and emails were re-sent twice within 3 weeks, leading to responses from 48 (30%) of school leaders (Table 4 and Figure 8). Out of the 48 responses, 10 school leaders declined the request for an interview. Interviews were successfully completed with 26 of the 38 school leaders who signaled an initial interest in study participation. Response rates were similar across TPSs and charter school leaders. 25 interviews were completed via phone and one via Skype (school leaders were given a choice, including the option of in-person interviews). The interviews were audio-recorded using a sound recording software and then transcribed to MS Word documents. The transcriptions were verbatim, including pauses and non-verbal utterances by the interviewees. Verbatim transcription was chosen because it requires attention to detail, thus being “clearly beneficial in facilitating data analysis by bringing researchers closer to their data” (Halcomb &

Davison, 2006, p. 40) and because it is vital to the close reading of text required for content analysis (see section on content analysis below).

Table 4:
Interview Responses

	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools	Total
“Community” included in guiding statement(s) Responses	10/40 (25.0%)	13/40 (32.5%)	23/80 (28.8%)
Schools who agreed to participate	8/40 (20.0%)	10/40 (25.0%)	18/80 (22.5%)
Schools who declined to participate	2/40 (5.0%)	3/40 (7.5%)	5/80 (6.3%)
Completed interviews	5/40 (12.5%)	6/40 (15.0%)	11/80 (13.8%)
“Community” not included Schools Responded	15/40 (37.5%)	10/40 (25.0%)	25/80 (31.3%)
Schools who agreed to participate	11/40 (27.5%)	8/40 (20.0%)	19/80 (23.8%)
Schools who declined to participate	4/40 (10.0%)	2/40 (5.0%)	6/80 (7.5%)
Completed interviews	7/40 (17.5%)	8/40 (20.0%)	15/80 (18.8%)
Totals Schools Responded	25/80 (31.3%)	23/80 (28.8%)	48/160 (30.0%)
Schools who agreed to participate	19/80 (23.8%)	18/80 (22.5%)	37/160 (23.1%)
Schools who declined to participate	6/80 (7.5%)	5/80 (6.3%)	11/160 (6.9%)
Completed interviews	12/80 (15.0%)	14/80 (17.5%)	26/160 (16.3%)

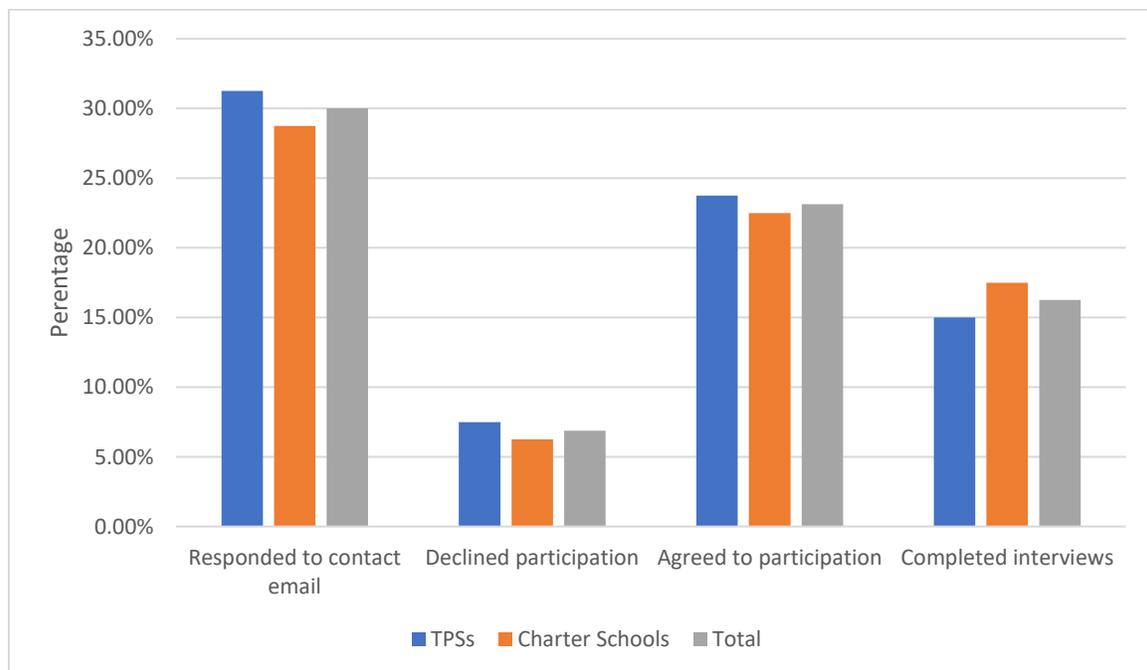


Figure 8. Response rates.

School principals/leaders. As mentioned above, school principals were interviewed due to their key role in the creation of guiding statements (Murphy & Torre, 2015) as well as loose coupling approaches (Bidwell, 2001). The term “school leader/s” is used in this study to reflect that in some cases, other school administrators such as superintendents, academic deans, etc. were interviewed. In each case, these school leaders were chosen either because the school did not have a principal position or because the school leader who was initially contacted referred me to another leader at the same school with more comprehensive knowledge of the guiding statements and their creation process. Of the 26 interviewees, 21 had the title of principal (one of whom was also a charter school founder), three were superintendents (two of small TPS districts with only one high school, one of a charter school group who was also a co-founder of the charter), and one each had the title of school founder, academic dean, and executive dean. As the interview questions show (see Appendix A), demographic data was limited to information about the educational background/career of the interviewee.

Interview protocol. The interviews were semi-structured, typically lasting 15-30 minutes (see Appendix A for interview questions). At the beginning of the interviews, the guiding statement(s) that had been obtained for the school were read aloud, both in order to provide a foundation for the interview through stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Messmer, 2015) and to check on the accuracy of the guiding statement. All guiding statements were confirmed to be accurate by the principals, with one exception where the guiding statement had just been revised within the current school year.

As the interviews were semi-structured, the flexible approach to the order of questions and the fact that principals also addressed conversation topics or details that were not in the focus of the study meant that each interview was unique in order and detail. The questions were generally asked in the order in which they are listed, but the sequence of the questions was frequently changed based on the principals' responses and follow-up and clarification questions were added. For example, in many cases, a school leader's response answered more than one question or alluded to the answer for another one so that this question was asked next. Checks for understanding of the responses, which could be described as informal member checking (Birt et al., 2016), particularly regarding their framing of community, were conducted either by asking them to repeat information or by rephrasing their comments, requesting them to comment on the way in which their response had been rephrased. Some principals found this engaging, while others simply responded with little more than yes or no. In any case, while member-checks were conducted, this was done in an attempt to clarify and elicit more detailed responses, thus exhibiting a constructionist/interpretive stance that highlights the co-construction of meaning (Birt et al., 2016).

Policy documents. The policy documents were retrieved from the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona School Boards Association, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, and AdvancED, a major accreditation agency for schools in the United States that was referenced multiple times during preliminary research and during the interviews with school leaders. All documents and databases were available publicly on the organizations' websites. The Arizona Department of Education was

directly contacted regarding any additional existing policies using the publicly available “I Have a Question” system (2017) which allows the submission of questions to the ADE online. The response confirmed, at least from the perspective of the ADE representative, that all relevant documents governing the creation of guiding statements at the state and school-district levels as well as all databases listing school guiding statements had been identified (see Table 5). These documents provided the policy context for the analyses of the guiding statements and the interviews, as together they form the regulatory framework governing the creation of school guiding statements.

Table 5:
Policy Documents

Organization	Documents
Arizona Department of Education	<i>Arizona Revised Statutes: Title 15 – Education</i> <i>Arizona State Board of Education Administrative Code</i> <i>“Find a School” database</i> <i>Arizona Report Cards database</i> <i>Standards and Rubrics: Schools Improvement (2005)</i>
Arizona State Board for Charter Schools	<i>New Charter Application (2017)</i>
Arizona School Boards Association	<i>Policy Bridge database (School district policies)</i>
AdvancED	<i>AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures (2015)</i> <i>AdvancED Standards for Quality (2011)</i>

Data Analysis

Framing. Before discussing the content analysis approach taken here as well as the coding and data analysis processes, it is important to review the idea of framing. Frame analysis is rooted in the work of Erving Goffman, who proposed that frames allow people to “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (1974, p. 21), or, as Andersson (2017) phrases it: “Acts that are carried out in daily life become understandable because of frames” (p. 1247). As neither Goffman nor those who followed clearly defined frame analysis or provided a framework for its application in research, I follow the approach taken by many who use

framing in their research (Andersson, 2017), which is to establish coding frames based on prior research and to adjust and refine these frames throughout the data analysis (see section on coding).

Given the review of the literature on community, I expected there to be different frames for the term community. Regarding the comparison of TPS and charter schools, it is important to note that while differences may occur, “[t]here are limited possibilities for changing frames” (Lakoff, 2010, p. 72). Further, the introduction of new frames for a given word is a complex task and requires the creators of texts, in this case guiding statements, to choose their words carefully (Lakoff, 2010). If indeed there are differences in the way community is framed in high school statements and by high school leaders, it is possible to assume that these differences are not accidental, but indicative of different ways of thinking about the concept of community.

As already pointed out above, high school guiding statements are part of school policy and thus rest “on underlying structures of beliefs, perceptions, and appreciations” (Schön & Rein, 1994, p. 23), which can also be seen as frames. The concept of framing guides the coding and data analysis of this study as I attempted to identify different frames for community in the analysis of the guiding statements and interviews. Frame analysis/framing theory emphasizes the social co-construction of frames (Andersson, 2017) as well as the effect of frames on social activity: “these frameworks are not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity itself is organized - especially activity directly involving social agents” (Goffman, 1974, p. 247). This emphasis fits well with the epistemological stance of new

institutionalism and thus coupling theory, which also emphasizes social interactions. Since Goffman's early work, research utilizing framing has acknowledged the importance of institutions and social structures in these framing processes. With schools and their guiding statements, multiple social agents are involved, from the school leader(s) to staff, to students, parents, and the general public. The approaches to frames taken by Goffman (1974) and Lakoff (2010) also mirror some of the underlying assumptions of new institutional theory (thus including loose coupling theory) and fit into the constructivist epistemological underpinnings of this study in their emphasis on the co-construction of meaning, which is also the case for content analysis.

Content analysis. This study employs an exploratory, qualitative content analysis supported by descriptive statistics. The quantitative part of the content analysis, in which counting is used to identify patterns in the data and to contextualize the codes (Morgan, 1993), focuses on the guiding statements, providing descriptive statistics for the framing of the word community. This part of the analysis thus provides an overview of the guiding statement data and serves as a foundation for the qualitative analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews. Therefore, as Berg (2004) states, "the magnitude for certain observations is presented to demonstrate more fully the overall analysis" (p. 270), meaning that the descriptive, quantitative analysis, i.e. the development and description of certain frames for community in the guiding statements and the counting of their frequencies, provides the foundation for the qualitative content analysis of the interviews with the school leaders and the comparison of frames found in guiding statements and interviews.

A common approach to content analysis defines it as “a method for classifying textual material that involves reducing it to more manageable, categorical, or quantitative data for use in comparative analysis” (Benoit, 2011; see also Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, 2000; Elo et al., 2014; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). However, as Baxter (1991) points out, “content analysts should not restrict themselves to summarizing surface features of messages but should instead interpret the meaning of content (p. 240), which is what the present study attempts. The quantitative part of the study allows for the exploration of the range of meanings that a word can have in normal use through the qualitative analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1285).

In this study, the focus is on the context in which the word community is used in order to understand the framing of the concept. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) focus on the products of qualitative and quantitative approaches to highlight their differences: “The quantitative approach produces numbers that can be manipulated with various statistical methods. By contrast, the qualitative approach usually produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world” (p. 309). The data collected for the given content analysis was not statistically analyzed beyond basic descriptive statistics, as the focus was on providing a qualitative analysis of the data. Such a basic quantitative foundation strengthens the overall analysis (Weber, 1990).

The distinction between latent and manifest themes (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) is the final binary set of concepts regarding content analysis and connected to the basic distinction between quantitative and qualitative analysis. Manifest content is that which

can be counted, for example in the case of this study frequency counts for the word “community” in school guiding statements. Latent content, on the other hand, is the subject of interpretative analysis (Baxter, 1991; Mayring, 2000): the coding of frames for community, is by definition reliant on latent content, as the context in which the word community appears is examined and categorized according to developing coding scheme based on prior research. In similar fashion to those pointing out the need for both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, Berg (2004) contends that “perhaps the best resolution of this dilemma about whether to use manifest or latent content is to use both whenever possible” (p. 270). As the following discussion of the study’s instruments and collected data will show, I try to answer the question of how the concept of community is framed in high school guiding statements and by school leaders in interviews through the analysis of both manifest and latent content. An example for the former is the focus on the word community in the analysis, which provides the foundation for a coding that explores the latent content around this term.

Both deductive and inductive content analysis were employed in this study. The content analysis was deductive from the outset in that it was guided by already existing categories for the concept of community but became more inductive as coding progressed. While neither deductive nor inductive content analysis features a required set of rules or procedures, deductive content analysis is marked by the use of existing information or more specifically categories for the analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, 2000; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Figure 9 illustrates a general model of deductive content analysis: Starting with the research question and the text at hand,

categories are developed for the analysis based on existing theory or research findings. These categories are then used for the coding of the data, with revisions and checks occurring as the analysis progresses, resulting in findings that are interpreted to answer the research questions. In the case of this study, deductive analysis is used to identify the ways in which community is framed in school guiding statements and by the principals/school leaders and inductive analysis is used with regards to how the guiding statements frame the concept of community.

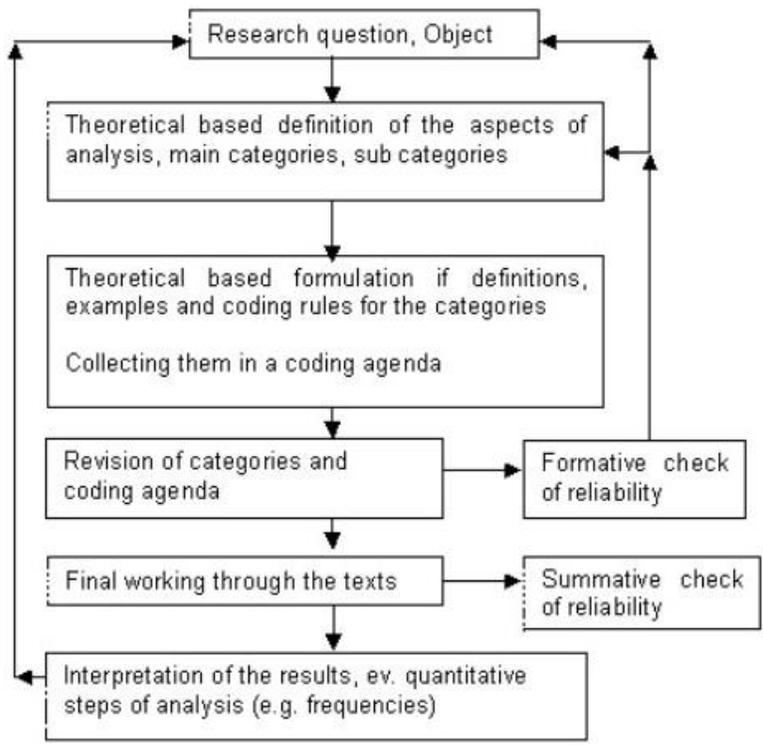


Figure 9: Model of deductive category application (Mayring, 2000).

Coding. As described above, the first step was a holistic round of coding (Saldaña, 2009), marking the guiding statements for whether or not they included the word “community.” After this, a second round of coding was conducted focusing on the group of guiding statements that included the word “community,” distinguishing between

definitions of community referring to outside and inside the school. These first two rounds of basic coding provided a first overview of the data, identifying the different ways in which community was framed, but also showing that about half of the schools did not feature the term community in their guiding statements. After an initial round of coding of the guiding statements not including the word “community,” the decision was made to not analyze them due to the lack of clear references to community, thus taking a more manifest approach to content analysis, but also adding another limitation to the study (further explanation on this below). Based on this initial coding of the guiding statements and resulting distinction of two basic groups of guiding statements, the decision was also made to purposefully collect interview data from both schools featuring the word community in their guiding statements and from those which did not. While this does not mitigate the limitation of only focusing on basic manifest content with regards to the concept of “community,” the group of schools that did not include the term “community” in their guiding statements was thus considered for the sampling for the interviews.

Based on the scope of framings of community identified in the first two initial steps, a more detailed coding scheme was developed to explore how community is framed in guiding statements and interviews. This coding scheme was based on pre-existing categorizations of framing of community, namely the work of Adams et al. (2014), Arthur (2003), and Keller (2003), as they mirrored the general consensus in the research on schools and because they were among the few sources that tried to define different frames for community explicitly. According to Arthur (2003), three general

types of communities are connected to schools: the community of those attending and working within, i.e. the community of the school itself, the community of people living within an area around the school, and the larger society, the community of the nation, which all members of these smaller communities are part of. Adams et al. (2014) proposes categories that more or less mirror those of Keller (2003), as already pointed out in the Literature Review chapter:

- a group of people (similar to Keller's requirement of social ties between people)
- the exchange of shared values and expectations between these people (which includes Keller's category of social ties and social ideals and expectations, as well as perhaps the idea of a collective framework)
- a shared space, whether geographical or virtual (parallel to Keller's first major theme of geo-spatial characteristics)
- mutual effects of community and people on each other (the characteristic most different from Keller's categories).

These categorizations of community were then combined based on the initial data collection (thus introducing an inductive element to this part of the study), adding in particular the distinction between community *outside* of the school and community *inside* the school as many schools addressed community referring to a community within the school. This coding scheme was refined during iterative rounds of coding (Saldaña, 2009; see Table 6 for the final coding scheme) based on the collected data.

Analysis process. Using the coding system described in Table 6, I marked each guiding statement and each interview for the way in which community was framed in it.

Table 6:
*Coding Scheme for Framing of Community**

Code	Description
1	<p>Community = defined geographically (local), i.e. instances in which community was defined as a local, geographically or spatially limited concept.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “The philosophy of Prescott High School reflects the diverse values of the Prescott community,...” Charter school: “ACPA’s teaching faculty reaches out often and actively to the students, parents and the Tucson community.”</p>
2	<p>Community = defined geographically (national/global), i.e. instances in which guiding statements used the phrase “global community” or “national community.”</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “The mission of Santa Rita High School is to provide a safe environment that promotes the development of students as lifelong learners able to live productively in an everchanging technological, social and global community.” Charter school: “Deer Valley Academy's vision is to develop competent, productive students who are prepared to enter the global community.”</p>
3	<p>Community = presented as a value, as an ideal or expectation shared by people that one should strive toward.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “Campo Verde is dedicated to Community, Values, Honor and Scholarship.” Charter school: “... Values: Team, Trust, Creativity, Organization, Discipline...Excellence, Respect, Love, Responsibility, Community”</p>
4	<p>Community = the students’ community/ies, i.e. instances in which guiding statements present the students as inherent parts of a given community outside of the school, marked by the use of the pronouns “their” or “your” (in instances where guiding statement content directly addressed students).</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “The mission of Perry High School is to provide an enriched environment where our students can develop Pride in themselves, their school, and their community;...” Charter school: “We graduate leaders responsible for their community who are academically prepared, empowered to make informed decisions, and confident in their ability to succeed.”</p>
5	<p>Community = a group of people with stakeholders beyond, yet often including, students and parents, i.e. any instance in which community was described as a group of people outside of the school that have a connection or relationship to the school.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “We will build strong, lasting relationships with our students, parents, staff, and community.” Charter school: “We recognize reputation is one of our most valuable assets and needs to be protected through our work with students and the community.”</p>
6	<p>Community = a collective of people to which students’ make valuable contributions. This code marks instances in which students’ contributions to one or more given community/ies, whether currently or after their school career, were mentioned.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> TPS: “Our mission is to provide an educational environment that supports and promotes the efforts of all students to become self-sufficient, contributing members of the world community.” Charter school: “The mission of ASU Preparatory Academy is to provide a personalized, university embedded, academic program that empowers students to complete college, excel in a global society and contribute to their communities.”</p>
7	<p>Community = diversity, i.e. instances in which the plural of communities is used or community is explicitly described as marked by diversity.</p>

	<p><u>Example:</u> TPS: “BHS provides..., thus cultivating critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and compassionate citizens, who are able to thrive in our increasingly complex and technological communities.” Charter school: “Encouraging ACPA students to be competitively skilled, self-motivated, civic-minded and participatory, further promotes the essential elements of being healthy citizens of different communities and thriving in college.”</p>
8	<p>Community = school supports community, i.e. instances in which the guiding statement describes how the school contributes to the community (not including contributions that are specifically those of students). <u>Example:</u> TPS: “TCHS with a proud tradition of excellence recognizes our vital role in the community,…” Charter school: “We believe that building a strong and vibrant school will not only benefit our students, but everyone we touch. In the spirit of this belief, we pledge to give back to our local community with our every action.”</p>
9	<p>Community = the school as a learning community/community of practice, i.e. a community inside of the school that focuses on certain educational values or goals. <u>Examples:</u> TPS: “Horizon High School’s mission is to create a community of learners focused on:…” Charter school: “Liberty High School is an educational community committed to…”</p>
10	<p>Community = school-community partnerships/collaboration, i.e. instances in which school-community relationships are specifically described as partnerships, collaborations, or shared. <u>Example:</u> TPS: “Combs, in partnership with the community, is a culture where students maximize their potential and…” Charter school: “ACAA Community Believes: 1.) education is the shared responsibility of students, parents, school, and community.”</p>
11	<p>Community = “our” community, i.e. guiding statements with the phrase “our community.” <u>Example:</u> TPS: “We value our community’s history.” Charter school: “The mission of the Cornerstone Charter School is to provide meaningful and responsive educational programs and environments to address our community’s interest while…”</p>

*Note: As most high school guiding statements in the sample were marked for more than one code, some of the examples above are also marked for more than one code. Moreover, in most of the examples, only an excerpt from the guiding statement is presented.

All guiding statements received more than one code for their framing of community. For example, the following guiding statement was marked for both code 5 (a group of stakeholders beyond just students and parents) for the first instance in which the term “community” was used and code 9 (the school as a learning community/community of practice) for the second instance: “Tucson High Magnet School is a learning community in which student success is the priority of all endeavors...The Tucson High Magnet community will:...Continue interaction with the community.”

As Table 6 indicates, codes 1 and 2 were applied when community was explicitly framed locally (Code 1) or globally/nationally (Code 2), the former through the explicit mentioning of a name of a city or town (see example in Table 6), the latter through the use of the words “global” or “national.” Similarly, code 4 (“their community/ies”) and code 11 (“our community”) mark the presence of a specific phrase in a guiding statement. For code 7, the word community had to be used in the plural or explicitly described as “diverse.” For all other codes (3; 5-9), a variety of contextual factors determined whether or not a code was applied as the frames for community expressed in these codes were presented in a variety of different ways in the guiding statements.

By focusing on guiding statements that featured the term “community” only, a more manifest approach to content analysis was taken, reducing the amount of interpretation of latent content. This decision was first of all made as instances in which the word community was not used, but potentially suggested through a different term or phrasing, were rare, especially if not including any phrasing referring to social interaction between people that could be interpreted as fitting into frame of community that focused on this element of community. Secondly, the instances in which guiding statement content could have been interpreted as part of a frame for community typically focused on other popular concepts that are connected to the idea of community to different degrees and come with their own fuzziness in terms of definitions. For example, only three schools’ guiding statements featured the term neighborhood, which could be seen as alluding to the concept of community in the sense of a local, geographically defined community. However, the term neighborhood is also defined differently from community

as necessarily spatial in a more narrowly local sense (Ayers, 2015; Walton, 2018), frequently connected to the concept of sense of community (Glynn, 1986; Walton, 2018), as well as carrying other connotations and bodies of research in education (cf. Carlson & Cowen, 2015b). In the research on community reviewed for this study, the term is at times mentioned, but rarely defined or clearly compared to the concept of community (Carlson & Cowen, 2015a; 2015b). When they are clearly defined and used for systematic study, it is because they equated to administrative, political units with clear geographical borders (cf. Drukker et al., 2009; Walton, 2018), which, as the Literature Review has suggested, does not apply to the concept of community.

During the initial coding process, the school districts or charter management organizations whose schools featured the same guiding statements were identified, meaning that each individual school did not have a unique guiding statement. This lack of uniqueness could be seen as evidence for tight coupling, especially given the general diversity of the length and content of guiding statements. These guiding statements were marked with a code identifying guiding statements that were the same across districts or management organizations.

As described above, the coding scheme was developed from the guiding statements as they provided a larger quantity of available data. After applying the coding scheme to the guiding statements, it was then used for the analysis of the interview data as well: it was observed during the interviews that the prompting through the research questions resulted in all school leaders mentioning the word community repeatedly and a brief round of exploratory coding after the initial collection of each interview did not

reveal any need for the revision of the existing coding scheme. Upon collection of all interviews, the interview transcripts were examined for instances in which the word community was used, thus again focusing on manifest content. However, statements were included if, from the context or the interview question, it was clear that the school leader referred to the notion of community, such as in the following example: “There isn’t a geographic boundary as much as you buy into what we do on campus.”

Due to the relatively small sample size, descriptive statistics were not provided as the focus was on collecting different perspectives on the framing of community that could enhance the findings of the analysis of the guiding statements and support the interpretations of these findings. The focus was thus on a comprehensive understanding of how the principals framed community, rather than counting the number of instances a certain framing, as frequency counts can vary significantly depending on a principal’s conversation style. In addition to the focus on the framing of community in the interviews, two additional types of information were collected: The school leaders’ explanations regarding the policy framework governing the use of guiding statements by high schools in Arizona, as well as information on the creation process of guiding statements.

Validity and generalizability. First, it is important to point out that an exploratory, unique and ad hoc content analysis as the present one lacks the validity of studies using methodologies that have been tested repeatedly over time (Krippendorff, 1980). While similar content analyses of guiding statements have been conducted (e.g., Bishop, 2007; Boerema, 2006; Schafft & Biddle, 2013; Stemler & Bebell, 1999; Stemler

et al., 2011) and Stemler et al. (2011) in particular argue for the validity of the content analysis of guiding statements, these studies did not focus on the concept of community. However, the principled design of the study discussed in the following helps establish a degree of validity and so does the detailed reporting of how results were created (Elo et al., 2014). Regarding generalizability, the study is limited by its focus on high school in Arizona, and findings would be expected to differ for other states as loose coupling is highly dependent on local policy contexts.

The validity of the two major types of data will be evaluated separately. For the guiding statements, the goal was to sample the complete population of high schools serving grades 9-12 in the state of Arizona, which was almost accomplished, thus resulting in relatively high external validity (Krippendorff, 1980; 2004) and generalizability of the guiding statement findings across Arizona. The exclusion criteria were informed by the goal of producing a sample of schools serving grades 9-12 that was as comparable as possible with regards to the school's general education purpose or function. In other words, highly specialized types of schools were excluded in order to increase the validity of the comparison between all the schools in the sample as well as between TPSs and charter schools. Further, the content analysis of the guiding statements produced findings that exhibited similarities and differences in the distribution of frames for community, thus supporting claims that indeed guiding statements can be studied in systematic ways (Stemler et al., 2011) and that the given data set allowed for a content analysis of the framing of community in guiding statements due after the initial round of

coding suggested sampling validity and thus the ability to find answers to the given research questions (Krippendorff, 2012).

Regarding the interviews, the sampling process led to a sample that was marked more by response rate than stratification or purpose, as the distribution according to school locale (see Table 10 in Chapter 5) is not representative of the state of Arizona, thus potentially leading to relatively low external validity and generalizability of the findings from the interviews (Leviton, 2015). This is especially a concern given the fact that the sampling ultimately was a convenience sample with purposeful elements, rather than the original plan of purposeful sampling which would have been suitable for recruiting supposed experts (i.e., school leaders) on the topic of guiding statements and the framing of community and thus contributed to the study's validity (Elo et al., 2014). However, the primary goal of adding the interviews was not to create a representative sample (although that would have been ideal), but to reach saturation and therefore establish a basic level of validity (Elo et al., 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), i.e. a sufficient number of interviews to be able to understand school leaders' framings of community and to support the findings of the analysis of the guiding statements. The analysis of the interviews suggested that saturation was reached as responses were similar, thus supporting the assumption that a number of 12 studies would provide saturation in qualitative studies (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The effect of the exclusion of certain specialized school types for creating the final sample of high school guiding statements became relatively clear from an interview with a school leader who, as it turned out during the interview, was in charge of a school

focused on remedial education, which is one of the exclusion criteria that had been set for the study. The interview with this school leader was still conducted and helped understand if responses would, as assumed, indeed differ for leaders of highly specialized schools. During the interview and when listening to the recording, it appeared more difficult for the school leader to explain his or the school's understanding of community, in particular with regards to the community beyond/outside the school. This observation supports the validity of the interview questions as well as the initial sampling/exclusion criteria as this interview essentially served as an unintentional pilot study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). It was the second interview conducted and allowed for a focus on follow-up questions as well as on comparing the responses to those of the first interview, thus suggesting a basic level of validity of the instrument (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Further, it led to another revision of the sample, ensuring that there was not another school that had been missed when applying the mentioned exclusion criteria to the list of high schools serving grades 9-12 in Arizona.

The coding scheme created for the content analysis was based on and followed protocols established in qualitative research in general (Creswell, 2012) and deductive content analysis in particular. As described above, a combination of deductive and inductive coding was used (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, 2000; Vaismoradi et al., 2013), informed by a review of the literature on community (Adams et al., 2014; Arthur, 2003; Keller, 2003) as well as by an initial, exploratory round of coding of the guiding statements, following established research design patterns for content analysis that generally lead to valid results. The fact that the coding scheme was guided by existing

literature in particular should add to its validity (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Four rounds of coding were conducted in total, including the initial holistic coding (Saldaña, 2009) for whether or not the guiding statements included the term “community,” a further deductive round of coding informed by definitions of community in the research literature which resulted in the establishment of the final coding scheme used for the content analysis, as well as two rounds of coding with this coding scheme. Despite these four rounds of coding, the fact that I was the only coder can be seen as affecting the validity of the coding as a second coder is generally preferable (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

As the discussion of the findings will show, similar frames for community were discovered in the analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews, both across the whole samples as well as when comparing charter schools and TPSs. At the same time, systematic differences will be pointed out. The similarities suggest that the instruments and collected data did indeed appear to allow a systematic analysis of how community is framed in high school guiding statements and by high school leaders and thus suggest validity of the analysis (Stemler et al, 2011).

A further step taken to validate the answer to some of the questions in the interviews was the collection of policy documents as well as basic communication with representatives of the Arizona Department of Education. These policy documents provided additional, outside information about the rules and regulations governing the creation and content of guiding statements, helping not only to provide a foundation for the interpretation of the findings, but also to attempt to indirectly validate the statements

made by the school leaders regarding guiding statement creation and content (Krippendorff, 2012).

A concern regarding the study's validity is that high school guiding statements are complex and often co-constructed by various stakeholders (Bishop, 2007; Mophew & Hartley, 2006; Murphy & Torre, 2015; Stemler et al, 2011). They thus are not simply accurate representations of high school leaders' frames of community or for that matter even mirrors of frames of the stakeholders involved in the process. However, they are publicly available texts that are written with for the primary purpose of expressing the underlying beliefs or goals the school community wants to work toward (Allen, 2001). Coming from a constructivist research approach, I do not assume that schools are "living their guiding statements"; for example, whether schools include the word "community" in their guiding statements does not necessarily reflect their framing of community – guiding statements are simply accessible text and, as one school leader acknowledged in an interview, important themes are sometimes overlooked in the creation of guiding statements. The review of the research presented in Chapter 3 as well as the interviews, which served to validate the analysis of the guiding statements, suggest that the frames for community expressed in the high school guiding statements considered for this study are indeed generally accurate representations of those who construct the guiding statements and to varying extent (depending on the considerations of those who construct the guiding statements) the larger school community.

Having sampled all high schools in Arizona serving grades 9-12 that serve a general population of students (as defined by the inclusion criteria), the findings

regarding the high school statements can be seen as reflecting this population of schools in the state of Arizona. However, as pointed out above, these findings cannot be expected to be generalizable to all high schools meeting these criteria across the United States: depending on varying policy contexts, particularly different regulations regarding guiding statements or charter schools, findings may differ from state to state. Still, the frames for community in guiding statement may be very similar, particularly with similar policy contexts (Stemler et al, 2011).

The interviews served to provide triangulation as they were another data set that helped answer the research questions and add to the generalizability of the findings to the population of high schools in Arizona. Saturation, as defined by Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006) was reached and data analysis and the interviews produced similar themes regarding the framing of community when compared to the high school guiding statements, thus adding to the validity of the findings. Moreover, the interviews contained additional insights regarding guiding statement creation and content from people with inside knowledge on the processes, thus helping to validate the study's findings (Elo et al., 2014). Nonetheless, a slightly larger number of interviews that would have been more representative regarding school locale would have been desirable, which brings us to the limitations of the study.

Limitations

As with any study, one can identify limitations regarding the methodology. In the case of this study, limitations apply to the use of guiding statements, the sampling and data collection procedures, and the use of content analysis. First, it can be questioned if

focusing on high schools provided a particularly distinct insight into the framing of community as Weiss and Piderit (1999) found no statistical differences in guiding statement content between school types. This is a valid concern, but even if high school guiding statements would indeed not differ in their approach to community from those of elementary and middle schools, the size of the dataset for this study would still provide an overview for schools in the state of Arizona. Moreover, high schools, with their focus on the transition of students into college on the one hand and the job market on the other hand, are seen as a critical component to the economic well-being of the United States, even with the recent focus on (early) childhood education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

As Elo et al. (2014) state, “the trustworthiness of content analysis results depends on the availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data” (p. 8). It could be argued that guiding statements do not provide such data as they are relatively short in length, frequently featuring formulaic language or simply “buzz words,” and thus reducing the study’s internal validity given the research questions. However, researchers have demonstrated that it is possible to use guiding statements for principled research, depending on the methodology and research questions (e.g., Schafft & Biddle, 2013; Stemler, Bebell, & Sonnabend; 2011). Still, given that the term “community” only appeared in about half of the guiding statements in the dataset and was frequently not in the focus of guiding statements which did feature the concept, the answers provided by this study regarding how schools today frame the notion of community can indeed be

described as limited. The additional data provided by the interviews addressed this shortcoming at least to some extent.

The relatively low percentage of responses to the interview requests is another limitation of this study. Convenience or snowball sampling might have produced higher response rates and thus more interviews, but they also might have led to a more biased sample. Moreover, the total number of interviews conducted is not particularly large, possibly excluding important voices from being heard and reducing generalizability. However, the interviews that were collected show some significant overlap regarding the framing of community by the principals/school leaders suggesting that a larger number of interviews would be relatively unlikely to alter the study's findings and thus that saturation was indeed reached.

The relatively short length of some of the interviews (around 10-15 minutes) can be interpreted in two ways (cf. Burke & Miller, 2001): either principals did not have more to say on a relatively focused set of questions, especially under the time constraints of a busy work day, or the phone interview process led to less rich data than face-to-face interviews could have. As the researcher I tried to be mindful of the limited time of the principals during their work day, so I did not follow up with a large number of questions or ask the same question in a variety of different ways, especially when the answers were relatively clear.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This section is divided into three parts: I first describe the policies governing the creation of guiding statements in the state of Arizona, providing a summary of the policy documents constituting the policy framework and additional information I had with representatives of the Arizona Department of Education. Based on this policy framework, I then report the results of the content analysis, describing how schools framed the concept of community in their guiding statements. In the third part, I present the findings of the interviews with school leaders.

The Policy Framework for Guiding Statements in Arizona

First, it should be noted that there is no federal or state legislation explicitly requiring or governing the creation or content of guiding statements for public schools in Arizona, suggesting a relatively loose coupling of this particular aspect of schools' operations. This was confirmed through email interactions with representatives of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), who stated that with Arizona being a state emphasizing local control, "ADE does not have the authority to require schools to have a mission statement" (ADE, personal communication, 2017). However, closer inspection of the existing regulatory framework seems to indicate the existence of policies that require or at least assume the existence of guiding statements and may indicate a tighter coupling of procedures around guiding statements than the general absence of federal and state-level policies suggests. In this part of the study, I sought to better understand the

policy/regulatory framework that governs the creation and potentially the content of high school guiding statements.

State policy. First, while Title 15 – Education of the Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) does not explicitly mention a requirement for the creation or content of guiding statements, there are regulations that, at least theoretically, allow for the stipulation of a mission or vision statement. ARS 15-351 “School councils; duties; membership,” Section B (Arizona State Legislature, 2017c), states that “Each school shall establish a school council. A governing board may delegate to a school council the responsibility to develop a curriculum and may delegate any additional powers that are reasonably necessary to accomplish decentralization.” This section thus gives school districts the opportunity to establish a variety of requirements for school councils, one of which can be the creation of a guiding statement (whether mission or vision). However, guiding statements are not directly addressed here and there is a lot of room for interpretation regarding this section of the ARS, thus pointing to relatively loose coupling of high schools in Arizona regarding the creation and content of guiding statements.

Further, researching the manuals of school district boards in Arizona (Arizona School Boards Association, 2017), the following regulation can be found in identical language in many, though not all manuals of school district boards: Under “Section C - General School Administration,” regulation “CFD-E©: School-Based Management” on School Councils states “Research has identified characteristics of effective schools. Such research makes it clear that the most influential unit of effective school change or improvement is the individual school demonstrating the following characteristics:

Consensus on explicit instructional goals and beliefs (mission statement)” (Arizona State Boards of Association, 2017). This section appears to establish a direction relationship between the creation of a mission statement as an explicit statement of instructional goals and beliefs on the one hand and school effectiveness and improvement on the other hand. Therefore, this regulation does appear to reflect a focus on a clearly articulated school mission from the side of the school district boards and thus provides evidence for a tighter coupling of schools through district policies directly mentioning guiding statements.

Additional evidence for the emphasis on the value of guiding statements and at the same support for a relatively decentralized legislation regarding their use in Arizona at the state level comes from the standards part of the Arizona State Board of Education’s rules, which govern the operations of districts and schools in Arizona (Arizona Department of State, 2016). In section R7-2-603 “Professional Administrative Standards” the first standard states that administrators should “Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student” (Arizona Department of State, 2016, p. 42). This standard for administrators is another piece of policy that suggests that mission and vision are seen as essential to best practices in school leadership, without directly requiring their creation or dictating content. Nonetheless, collaboration is stressed as a major part of the process. Again, this policy suggests that there is a lot of room for the type of idiosyncratic decision-making at the school level that is typical for loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976).

Similarly, Section R7-2-602 “Professional Teaching Standards” spells out that one of the 20 requirements listed under Standard 10 “Leadership and Collaboration” is that the teacher “[a]ctively shares responsibility for shaping and supporting the mission of his/her school as one of advocacy for learners and accountability for their success” (Arizona Department of State 2016, p. 42). Again, the existence of a mission is assumed. Further, the standard indirectly dictates that advocacy for learners and accountability be part of a school’s mission statement. Further, the word choice of “shaping” implies that teacher input on school mission is possible and desired. Finally, sections R7-2-604.02 “Professional Preparation Program Approval Procedures” and R7-2-604.04 “Alternative Professional Preparation Program Approval Procedures” list as one element of these procedures that schools have to provide their vision and mission. (Arizona Department of State, 2016, p. 51). These requirements may support the assumption of relatively frequent revision of guiding statements, or at the very least that school administrators should have to engage with them relatively frequently, but this would point to loose coupling and the ability to create local adaptations.

A further document suggesting the external requirement and regulation of guiding statements are the Arizona Department of Education’s (2005) “Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement” which, for example, include the following indicator for one of their standards: “Leadership (i.e., governing board, district administration, and principals) has led an inclusive process of developing a sustained and shared philosophy, vision and mission that promotes a culture of excellence” (p. 7). Notably, this document has since been replaced by updated standards (Arizona Department of Education, 2007), but it

again suggests that state-level policies require many if not all school administrators to at the very least be aware of their guiding statements if not to revise or update them regularly. However, they also appear to leave room for local adaptations typical of loosely coupled schools. This assumption is supported by Stemler and Bebell's work (2011; 2012), who found current education policy issues to be reflected in school mission statements.

The policy documents discussed above suggest that mission statements are required through school district policy and together indicate that guiding statements are desired as part of best practices for effective schools. Overall, this type of policy environment could still be described as relatively loosely coupled with regards to schools' coupling to the state department of education as well as school districts, though school-school district coupling appears to be tighter. However, there is one policy document explicitly requiring from the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (2017) for new charter schools to submit guiding statements: In the application for a new charter, i.e. even before creating a charter school, ASBSC lists the requirement to describe the mission of the proposed new school: "Provide a statement describing the mission of the proposed school" (Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, 2017). Therefore, all charter schools have at the very least a mission statement. The application was referenced by several of the charter school principals in the interviews and they confirmed that the application required the creation of a mission statement. This initial requirement, however, does not stipulate any future revisions of the mission statement and allows for local adaptations, thus suggesting a relatively loose coupling of charter schools.

Accreditation Organizations. As the interviews were conducted, it became clear that accrediting organizations that conduct reviews of high school in Arizona are important actors in the creation of guiding statements. Their requirements and actions appear to lead to a more tightly coupled policy environment than the state-level policies alone, but it also seems as if ultimately decisions are made at the school level without much or any external influence. Accrediting agencies, as their name suggests, provide accreditation for high schools and other educational institutions, certifying that the school meets certain minimum standards. The exact regulations are different from state to state and accreditation is not required in Arizona (U.S. Department of Education, 2017; Wieder, 2011). AdvancED was the only accrediting organization that was named by the school leaders during the interviews so this section here focuses on the policies of this organization. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organization providing accreditation services across the United States as well as internationally and has one of its headquarters in Tempe, Arizona. While accreditation is not required in Arizona, all the schools that were interviewed were working with AdvancED for accreditation.

Accreditation agencies such as AdvancED create standards for schools seeking accreditation and, as Stemler et al. (2011; cf. also Stemler & Bebell, 2012) note, “nearly all major school accrediting bodies require a mission statement from schools seeking accreditation” (p. 390). AdvancED’s “Standards for Quality” tie their evaluation process to the content of guiding statements as they “require each school to be reviewed in a way that is appropriate to its mission and purpose” (AdvancED, 2016). In other words, while this is not an explicit requirement of a mission or vision statement, it is impossible to

review a school based on its mission and purpose if those are not articulated in some form. Guiding statements and community as a value or metric of quality are not absent from AdvancED's "Standards for Quality Schools" either: These standards require that "[t]he school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning (AdvancED, 2011, p. 2). While the accreditation standards used to include specific requirements for schools concerning vision and mission (cf. Stemler et al., 2011; Stemler & Bebell, 2012), the available materials in 2016 do not feature this requirement anymore. However, schools are required, as part of AdvancED's accreditation policies and procedures, to notify AdvancED of "substantive" changes to their mission and purpose as this is seen as indicative of a major change in scope or focus (AdvancED, 2015, p. 2). Thus, AdvancED does not appear to mandate the existence or creation of a guiding statement, but guiding statements do appear integral to their accreditation process and their existence is presumed if not expected. This finding points to a tighter coupling that could lead to a form of normative isomorphism regarding guiding statement content as guiding statements appear to be discussed during accreditation processes.

The notion of community is only addressed once in the AdvancED policy documents: In the "Standards for Quality Schools" one indicator mentions "collaborative learning communities" that school teachers are supposed to participate in (AdvancED, 2011, p. 4). If community is a key concept to schools in the eyes of AdvancED then, it is not apparent from the policy documents (and thus suggests that schools are loosely coupled with regards to their approach to the notion of "community"), and likely to be

focused on a framing of community in this exact sense: As close, productive, school-internal, ties between teachers (and perhaps other school staff and students).

The three sets of policy documents from the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, and AdvancED suggest that there is not explicit regulatory framework for the creation of guiding statements for high schools in Arizona or any public guidelines that govern their creation or content. The existence of guiding statements does appear to be part of best practices in school administration, however, as AdvancED's accreditation policies assume the existence of guiding statements for each school. The notion of community is not a key focus of the policy documents examined and only tangentially addressed. While AdvancED's accreditation process may lead to a somewhat tighter coupling of schools regarding guiding statement content than one would assume when looking at the state-level policies only, it still suggests loose coupling regarding the notion of community.

Guiding Statements

As already stated in the Methodology section, the final sample of guiding statements (not including the five schools I could not obtain guiding statements for) consisted of 211 traditional public schools and 144 charter schools. To review the initial coding described in the previous chapter: the initial basic coding for the inclusion of the word "community" resulted in very similar numbers across TPSs and charter schools. There are only two salient qualitative differences: First in the number of guiding statements, including the use of the word community as referring to community outside of the school, and second in the number of guiding statements describing community as

both inside and outside of the school. Regarding the former, charter schools refer to community slightly more often as outside of the school when compared to TPSs (a 6.5% difference). Regarding the latter, TPS high school in Arizona more frequently addressed the notion of community as only inside the school (15.8% vs. 9.7% for charter schools). This early observation informed the ongoing analysis and was then explored further through the more refined coding and a more in-depth analysis of the guiding statements presented in the following.

For the 106 TPSs and 72 charter schools in the dataset whose guiding statements did feature the word “community,” the results of the more detailed coding of the framing of community are presented in Table 7 and Figures 10 and 11. As Table 7 shows, the average number of codes that were applied per guiding statement is very similar for both sets of schools (2.30 for TPSs and 2.43 for charter schools), meaning that both types of schools framed the notion of community on average in slightly more than two different ways per guiding statement.

The two frames used most frequently are Codes 5 and 9 with 69 and 78 instances, or 38.5 percent and 43.8 percent of all guiding statements in the sample. Code 5, the framing of community as a group of people with stakeholders beyond (but including) students and parents, is used more frequently by TPSs: It is featured in 41.5 percent of TPS guiding statements and 34.7% of charter schools. Frequently, code 5 showed in small lists of stakeholders in the school: such as in the following example: “Horizon High School exhibits a student-centered culture where students, staff and community are:...”

While suggesting that those who create the guiding statements have the notion of the community outside the school on their minds when creating the guiding statements, this

Table 7:
Frames of community (Guiding Statements)

Code	TPS	Charter	Total
1 Community = defined geographically (local)	5 (4.7%)	2 (2.8%)	7 (3.9%)
2 Community = defined geographically (national/global)	11 (10.4%)	1 (1.4%)	11 (6.2%)
3 Community = shared value, ideals, and/or expectations	15 (14.2%)	7 (9.7%)	22 (12.4%)
4 Community = “their” (the students’) community	6 (5.7%)	17 (23.6%)	23 (12.9%)
5 Community = group of people with stakeholders beyond students and parents	44 (41.5%)	25 (34.7%)	69 (38.8%)
6 Community = students contribute to community	26 (24.5%)	26 (36.1%)	52 (29.2%)
7 Community = diversity	7 (6.6%)	13 (18.1%)	20 (11.2%)
8 Community = school supports community	11 (10.4%)	19 (26.4%)	30 (16.9%)
9 Community = the school as a learning community/community of practice	47 (44.3%)	31 (43.1%)	78 (43.8%)
10 Community = school-community partnerships/collaboration	33 (31.1%)	15 (20.8%)	48 (27.0%)
11 Community = “our” (the school’s) community (outside of the school)	17 (16.0%)	7 (9.7%)	24 (13.5%)
Total (Average frequency of code per guiding statement)	222 (2.1/1)	163 (2.3/1)	385 (2.2/1)

Note: Percentages as well as average frequency of codes per guiding statement are based on the total number of guiding statements in each school category (TPS = 106 and Charter = 72).

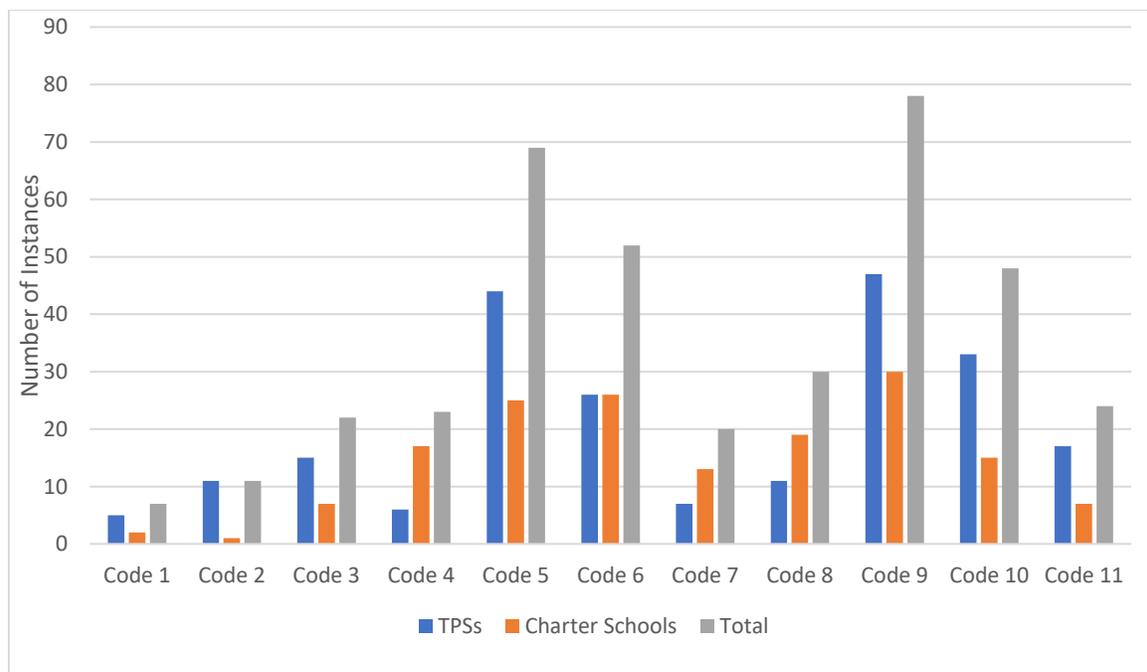


Figure 10. All instances of frames of community (guiding statements).

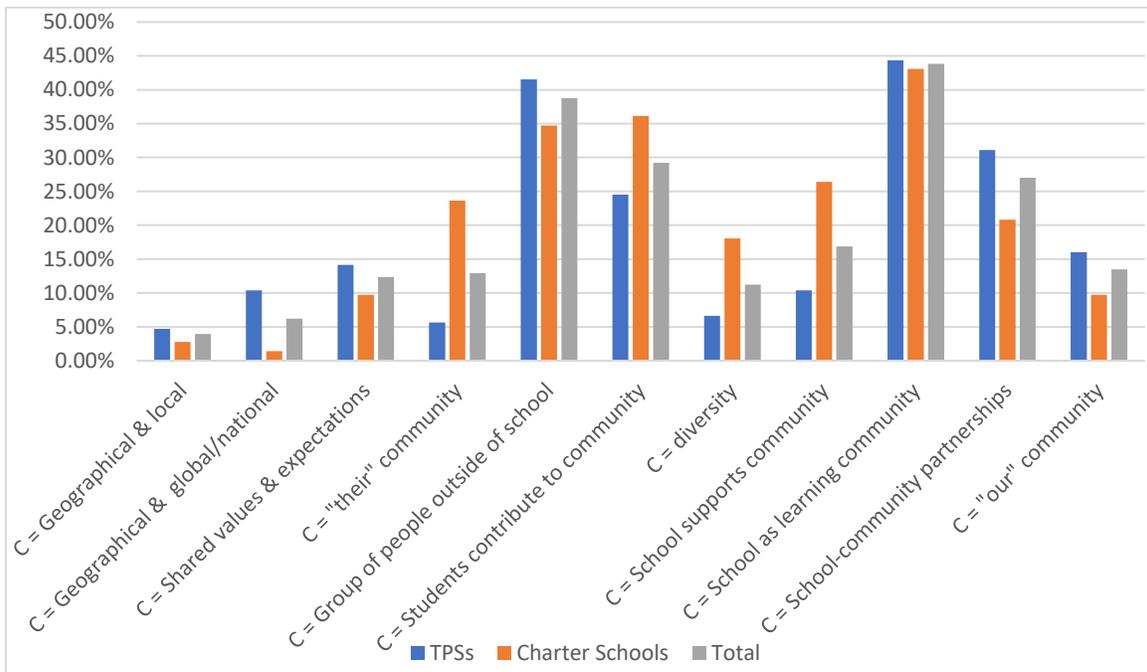


Figure 11. Frames of community as percentage of total (guiding statements).

Note: Percentages based on the total number of guiding statements in each school category (TPS = 106; Charter Schools = 72; Total = 178).

frame of community also appears to be separate from the school-internal community, referring to a group of people distinct from those who convene in the school. The difference between charter schools and TPSs is notable here, suggesting a relative absence of similarities between groups, and may suggest that TPSs frame this outside community as an important stakeholder more frequently than charter schools do, perhaps, as will be elaborated on in more detail later, in attempt to legitimize themselves to this outside community. Moreover, such a difference regarding a relatively basic frame for community may provide some evidence for Rowan's (2006) claim stated above that inter-group (TPS vs charter school) isomorphism is limited despite a relatively loose coupled education system at the state level.

On the other hand, we see some underlying isomorphism as both TPSs and charter schools framed community at almost the same percentage (44.3% for TPSs vs. 43.1% for charter schools) through the idea of the school as a learning community, a community focused on educational goals, ideals, and values that involves students, teachers, and other school staff (Code 9), such as in the following excerpts from guiding statements: “The mission of Desert View HS is to develop a community of learners in which all students are valued for their uniqueness and provided the opportunity to achieve their personal best” (TPS) and “Through a shared vision, Phoenix College Prep Academy, supported by Phoenix College, is committed to creating and sustaining a community where all learners will pursue high standards to succeed in college and career” (Charter school). No other code was as evenly distributed across TPS and charter school guiding statements, and while the frequencies are low for some codes and some differences (such as for Codes 3 and 7) are not particularly notable, the overall picture suggests that there are qualitative differences in the way in which community is framed by TPSs and charter schools. In the following, I will describe these differences and suggest that they may be the result of differences in the coupling of the two school types.

First, TPSs tend to frame their school as part of the local community more frequently, portraying a strong connection between the two, as the frequencies and distribution for code 1 (Community as local and geographically limited) and code 11 (“our community,” referring to a community outside of the school) suggest. The values are very low for code 1, with 5 TPS guiding statements framing community as local by either using the term local in conjunction with community (in only one case) or by

naming a specific city or town and thus geographical imitations. Examples for this code are “the community of Queen Creek”, “the Prescott community,” or “the greater Chandler community.” Only one charter school framed community in the latter way, which could suggest differences in coupling between the two types of schools.

The framing of community as “our community” (Code 11), which includes a very limited number of cases in which the school is portrayed as part of the community (...”as an extension of the community”) can be found more often in both TPS and charter school guiding statements: However, TPSs use the phrase “our community” much more frequently in guiding statements (16.0%) than charter schools (9.7%), thus perhaps exhibiting a closeness to the local community and potentially expressing that the school shares the same definition of this community as its students, parents, and other stakeholders. For example, one TPSs stated in its guiding statement that “The school is our community's most valuable asset,” clearly positioning the school as a central, integral part of the community, which it is a product of and simultaneously supports. There were only seven instances of the phrase “our community” in charter school guiding statements (For example: “Phoenix Collegiate Academy prepares Kindergarten to 12th grade students to succeed in college and be leaders in our community.”) and two of these came from schools with identical guiding statements as they were part of the same charter group. The frame of “our community” could be interpreted as attempts to legitimize the school the eyes of the community and the variance in frequency could be seen as a difference in the way TPSs and charter schools approach the question of legitimacy. Yet,

given the low frequency of cases for each group of schools, this difference needs to be considered carefully.

Clearer, yet still nuanced distinctions, can be seen when looking at other codes: Some high schools in Arizona also frame community as groups that consist of people beyond students and parents (Code 5), emphasizing social ties with this group as an important collaborator and portraying it as a source of support for the school (Code 10). For codes 5 and 10, we can see that TPS guiding statements address this group of people outside of the school that form a community (Code 5) and partnership or collaboration with them (Code 10) more frequently than charter schools do: 41.5 percent (Code 5) and 31.1 percent (Code 10) of TPS guiding statements feature these framings of community while only 34.7 percent and 20.8 percent of charter school guiding statements portrayed community in these two ways. For example, guiding statements stated that “staff, family, and community will empower all students (both code 5 and code 10; TPS), in this instance clearly separating community (members) from school staff, students, and the families of students. Another example, “Our Mission is to provide a quality education for all students, in a safe and nurturing environment, in partnership with parents and our community” (Code 5; TPS), again highlights the idea of partnership with the community outside of the school, a community that may include parents, but that in the eyes of the school appears to go beyond parents. TPSs in particular evoke partnerships or collaboration (code 10) in these or similar ways: “Our mission, in partnership with our parents and community, is to prepare all students today for tomorrow by fostering...” Charter school guiding statements feature such references of the school-community

relationship as a partnership in very similar ways (For example, “Through community, parent, teacher, and student partnership...”), but, as stated above, less frequently. Similar to the prior finding for Code 11, these observations could be interpreted through the lens of legitimacy, again suggesting that TPSs focus on establishing legitimacy in the eyes of the local community outside of their school.

Further, community is presented as a value or shared set of ideals and expectations by schools (Code 3), for example as in “Campo Verde is dedicated to community, values, honor, and scholarship” (TPS) or “...active learners who recognize and strive for quality, promote community and engage in service” (charter school). This framing of community is not found very often in either TPS (14.2%) or charter school (9.7%) guiding statements (see Figures 10 and 11). However, it is again a frame for community that is used more frequently by TPSs and indicates that the concept of community may be more frequently on the minds of those creating TPS guiding statements.

As Table 7 and Figures 10 and 11 show, four frames for community (Codes 4, 6, 7, and 8) were used more frequently in charter school guiding statements and thus provide more evidence for inter-group differences in the framing of community. Code 4 marked all uses of “their community,” referring to the community of the students, thus focusing on the students’ community rather than that of the school or one that the school is part of. Charter schools used this in 23.6 percent of all cases, while TPS only used it in 5.7 percent of guiding statements (see Table 7 and Figures 10 and 11). While presenting the students as owners or at least stakeholders of their community does not necessarily

mean that this community is not served by the school, this finding, in conjunction with the higher prevalence of “our community” in TPS guiding statements (as well as code 1), could suggest that charter schools have weaker ties to a specific community outside of the school, seeing the school less close to that/those community/ies. If this interpretation is accurate, it suggests that charter schools may legitimize themselves to the outside community through frames for community that are different from those of TPSs.

The charter school guiding statements also featured instances more frequently in which guiding statements highlighted that the school supports the community in some fashion (26.4%), for example “...to address our community's interest while preparing for and nurturing high academic achievement with our students” (charter school; code 8) or “These are critical statements and serve as the guides for how we intend to serve our students and their community” (TPS), portraying themselves as providing services to the community, a frame that potentially helps them legitimize themselves in the eyes of this community. The latter statement, while only one example, also highlights the juxtaposition of “our students” and “their community,” which suggests that the school is not connected to that/those community/ies. While some TPSs also pointed out their support function for the community, they did so much less often (10.4%; code 8). Again, these differences are not indicative of a loosely coupled system across the two types of schools, but rather provide some evidence for a difference in coupling (to the state department of education and school districts) between TPSs and charter schools.

Similarly, charter schools also highlighted more frequently ways in which their students contribute to the community outside of the school (code 6), for instance by

claiming that “We nurture our students academically, behaviorally, and emotionally to serve as productive and inspiring community members” (charter school) or stating the goal to “develop the student's potential in areas of academics... and community contribution” (TPS). This focus on the students’ ability to contribute to their communities not only applies to the students’ high school career, but also beyond: “Thus, our students walk with integrity and character, knowing what it is to be a thoughtful citizen in a democratic-republic and a positive force in their community” (Charter school). Charter schools thus tend to express more directly that they support the community in ways other than through providing educational services, framing themselves as a supporter of community through the institution and the students that attend it and perhaps seeking to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the public through this frame.

The final way in which charter schools framed community more often than TPSs was that of community as diverse, which again could be part of a different approach to community and the obtaining of legitimacy. Slightly more than 18 percent of the guiding statements who addressed community did note that this is a diverse concept, either through statements such as “a personalized, university embedded, academic program that empowers students to complete college, excel in a global society and contribute to their communities” (charter school) or, focused on the school community rather than the community outside the school “We will guide our actions through respect and acceptance of the individual and positive involvement within our diverse school community” (TPS). This finding is perhaps not surprising as it connects to the idea of open enrollment: With charter schools not serving a particular community defined in a narrow geographical way,

the students they serve come from different communities. At the same time, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, TPS guiding statements featured the idea of a global or world community, i.e. a community beyond the immediate local or even community/ies in the vicinity of the school, much more frequently than charter schools, where this idea was almost absent (Code 2; see Table 7 and Figures 10 and 11).

While these findings suggest inter-group differences and intra-group similarities in the coupling of TPSs and charter schools in Arizona, it is possible, of course, that some of these differences are due to other factors, such as school locale. I examined this possibility (Table 8 and Figure 12 for TPSs and Table 9 and Figure 13 for charter schools), but with frequency counts being low when looking at the school locale level, a valid comparison is difficult to make. For most codes, the frequency counts are five or below and one or two guiding statements can have a large impact on the distribution of the codes. However, it is worth noting a few points that stand out: First, the average number of codes, i.e. frames for community, per guiding statement is relatively consistent across locale and school type (with the exception of the relatively low number of 1.6 for charter schools in Rural locales, which may well be due to only five schools falling into this category). However, for TPSs it is schools in Town and Rural locales that have a slightly higher average than the other locales (Table 8) while for charter schools the highest average of frames of community was identified in City locales (Table 9). Second, among TPSs, rural schools and school in towns seem to frequently reference community as a group of people with stakeholders beyond students, and parents (Code 5), while schools in cities and suburbs often frame themselves as a learning community (Code 9).

Table 8:
Frames of Community by School Locale (TPSs)

Code	City	Suburb	Town	Rural	Total
1 Community = defined geographically (local)	1	2	-	2	5
2 Community = defined geographically (national/global)	5	2	1	2	10
3 Community = shared value, ideals, and/or expectations	5	2	3	5	15
4 Community = “their” community	3	2	1	-	6
5 Community = group of people with stakeholders beyond students and parents	10	3	12	19	44
6 Community = students contribute to community	9	5	5	7	26
7 Community = diversity	5	-	-	2	7
8 Community = school supports community	3	1	4	3	11
9 Community = the school as a learning community/community of practice	23	10	6	8	47
10 Community = school-community partnerships/collaboration	6	3	11	13	33
11 Community = “our” community	4	1	6	6	17
Codes per guiding statement	1.9/1	1.9/1	2.3/1	2.2/1	2.1

Note: This table displays the instances each code was found in the guiding statements. The “Codes per Guiding Statement” line displays the average number of codes per guiding statement in each group (City = 38; Suburb = 16; Town = 21; Rural = 31).

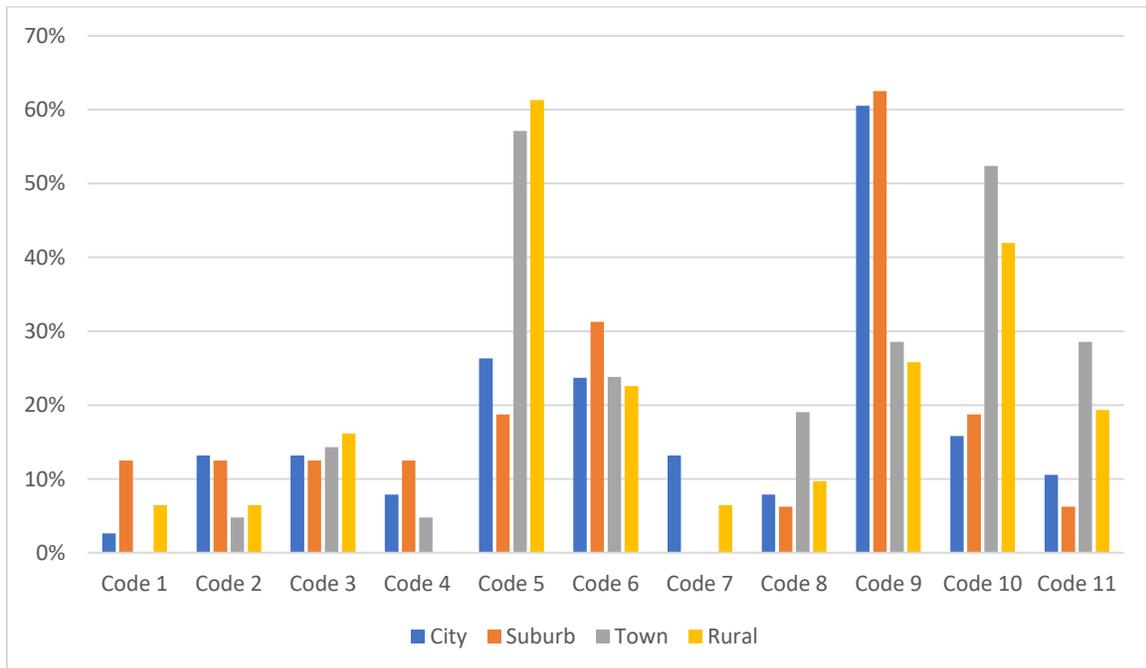


Figure 12. Frames of community by school locale (TPSs).

Note: Percentages based on total number of schools in each locale (City = 38; Suburban = 16; Town = 21; Rural = 31)

Table 9:
Frames of Community by School Locale (Charter Schools)

Code	City	Suburb	Town	Rural	Total
1 Community = defined geographically (local)	1	1	-	-	2
2 Community = defined geographically (national/global)	-	1	-	-	1
3 Community = shared value, ideals, and/or expectations	6	-	1	-	7
4 Community = “their” community	11	5	-	1	17
5 Community = group of people with stakeholders beyond students and parents	19	2	4	-	25
6 Community = students contribute to community	18	6	1	1	26
7 Community = diversity	10	-	1	2	13
8 Community = school supports community	12	4	2	1	19
9 Community = the school as a learning community/community of practice	26	1	2	2	31
10 Community = school-community partnerships/collaboration	13	1	1	-	15
11 Community = “our” community	6	1	-	-	7
Codes per guiding statement	2.3/1	2.4/1	2.0/1	1.4/1	2.3/1

Note: This table displays the instances each code was found in the guiding statements. The “Codes per Guiding Statement” line displays the average number of codes per guiding statement in each group (City = 52; Suburb = 9; Town = 6; Rural = 5).

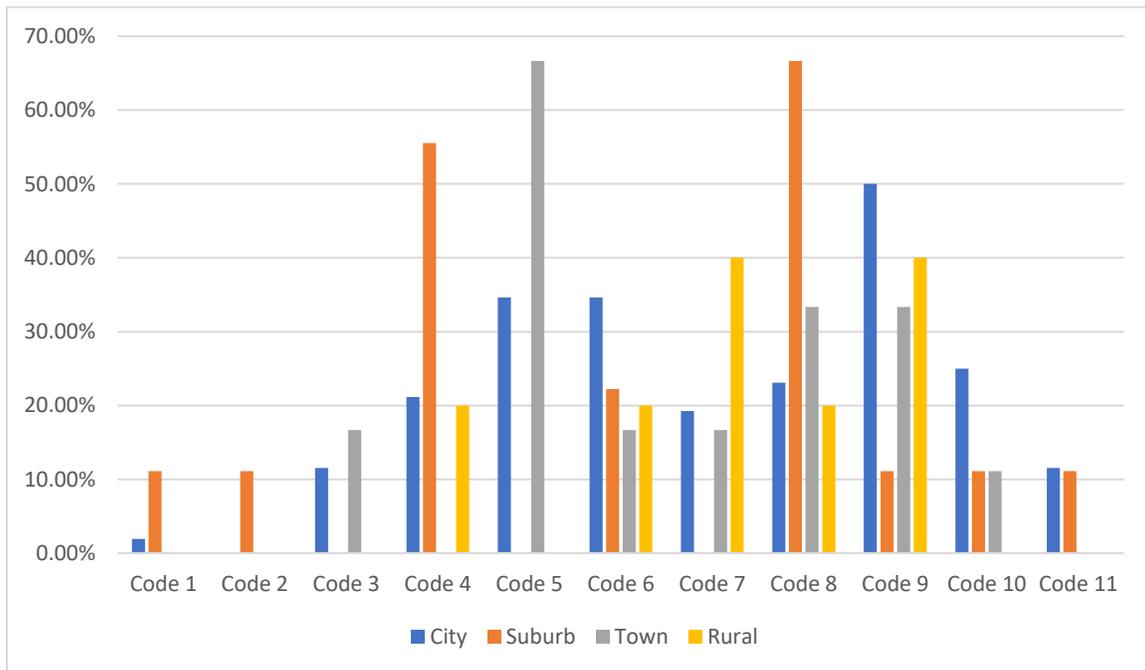


Figure 13. Frames of community by school locale (charter schools).

Note: Percentages based on total number of schools in each locale (City = 52; Suburb = 9; Town = 6; Rural = 5)

These data points could suggest that school locale matters regarding the framing of community. For charter schools, the frequency counts are even lower than for TPSs due to the smaller sample and with 62.8 percent of charter schools in a City locale and 22.4 percent in a Suburban locale, the higher frequency counts for schools from these locales have to be expected. A study with a larger sample may find that school locale has an effect on how community is framed in high school guiding statements, but the given data is too limited.

While the majority of guiding statements were developed by high school staff, not all high schools in the sample had guiding statements unique to their school. Schools with the same guiding statements across school district/charter management organization were included as separate entries in the analysis: On the side of the TPSs, high schools from two urban school districts (Phoenix Union High School District and Glendale Union High School District), which included 12 high schools together (5.7% of TPS schools for which I could find a guiding statement), featured matching guiding statements that were created at the district-level and not at the school level, indicating a higher degree of centralization and thus tight coupling. None of these guiding statements featured the word “community,” so that they do not affect the data described thus far, although one of the schools in this district had added a statement of core beliefs that featured the word community so that it was included. Three high schools from different larger school districts only listed their district-level guiding statements, despite other high schools in the same district having unique guiding statements which again can be interpreted as support for a tighter coupling of (at least some) TPSs. For six (three of which addressed

community) more TPS high schools from small school districts with only one high school, the guiding statements were the same for all schools (meaning all K-12 schools) in the school district. This means that overall, 21 high school guiding statements and thus 10.0 percent of all TPS guiding statements that were collected, were not unique to the particular traditional public high school.

For charter schools, 48 (exactly one third of the 144 schools) had guiding statements that were the same across charter holder or management organization,² suggesting much tighter coupling regarding the creation and content of guiding statements on the side of these types of charter schools, seem to confirm previously noted assumptions. It is important to recognize that the tighter coupling is connected with the fact that there are two larger management organizations (Basis charter schools and the Great Hearts Academies group) as well as a number of other charter holders/management organization operating two or more high schools in the state of Arizona.

The analysis so far shows both basic similarities and differences between the guiding statements of TPS and charter high schools in Arizona. The similarities are relatively clear when making a basic comparison of frequency for the word community (see Table 1) and both types of schools address the idea of the school as a learning community frequently, thus distinguishing between community within and outside of the school. Thus, community appears to be an important concept to schools, suggesting relatively loose coupling overall across school type. Even if about half of the schools do

² Charter schools that offer classes below grade 9-12 (i.e., middle and/or elementary school) as part of the same school (for example, a school serving K-12) and only have one set of guiding statements that apply across all grades/part of the school were not separated here.

not feature it in their guiding statements, this number is still relatively high when compared to how frequently other key words or themes have been identified in prior studies of guiding statements (Bishop, 2007; Perfetto et al., 2013; Weiss & Piderit, 1999) and also given that guiding statements focus on brevity, meaning they frequently do not include all concepts that school leaders and stakeholders value (an assumption that later on was confirmed in some of the interviews).

The ways in which community is framed in the guiding statements and by the school leaders in the interviews generally fit into established conceptualizations of the notion: Community is defined as a group of people, through a (geographically limited) shared space, as communication or interaction between people, and in terms of the mutual effects community and people (or in this case organizations such as schools as well) have on each other (Adams et al., 2014; Keller, 2003). The findings mirror prior research in a variety of other ways: The diversity of ways in which community has been defined (Adams, Feickert, Haut, & Sharaf, 2014; Amit, 2002b; Bell & Newby, 1972; Blackshaw, 2010; Creed, 2006; Fowler, 1991; Keller, 2003; Hillery, 1955), the lack of clear, ready definitions for the concept (Bauman, 2001; Cohen, 1985; 2002) and the way that it is commonly used in the field of education, often referring to a learning community or community of practice (Decker & Decker, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2006). The differences in the framing of community between charter schools and TPSs, however, adds to this literature. Moreover, we can see that certain understandings of community, in particular the basic distinction between the communities outside of the school and inside the school, are central to schools' framings of the concept. While only featured explicitly

in about half of the guiding statements, the interviews suggested that the idea of community is central to the schools' organizational and educational philosophies.

The content analysis has further provided a more nuanced picture of the framing of the concept of community in guiding statements. The main similarity in the conceptualization of community between TPSs and charter schools in Arizona is that that both types of high schools' guiding statements frequently refer to community when meaning the educational community within the school (Code 9). However, there is evidence that could be explained through differences in coupling between TPSs and charter schools: TPS guiding statements frame community more often in ways which could be interpreted as portraying a close tie to the local community, seeing the school as part of this community: Using the phrase "our community" (Code 11) more often suggests that TPSs express a stronger connection to the community they are located in, perhaps gaining legitimacy through this strong connection. They also address this community directly (although not frequently) by framing community in a local way (Code 1), again potentially obtaining seeking to gain legitimacy from that particular community that they mention in the guiding statements. Further supporting the idea of a close tie to the local community, TPS guiding statements relatively frequently bring up the idea of school-community partnership or collaboration (Code 10), thus, at least according to the guiding statements, engaging the community in what happens in the school, which can also be seen as a way to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Charter high schools in Arizona, on the other hand, may attempt to obtain legitimacy by framing the concept of community differently in guiding statements: The guiding statements frequently focus on the school's and its students' contributions to the community outside of the school (Code 8 and Code 6), emphasizing how the school contributes to the community outside of the school. Charter schools also stress the diversity of community or the existence of multiple communities more often than TPSs (Code 7), perhaps showing an understanding that they are admitting students from various communities, both in a geographical sense and in terms of shared ideals and values.

The relative basic similarity of guiding statements across both school types, when just looking at the inclusion of the term "community," suggests the presence of isomorphism and that there are few if any differences in terms of coupling between TPSs and charter schools. Still, most guiding statements are unique and showcase how each school had a different thought process and unique focus, which the interview data presented in the following appears to support. The differences between TPS and charter high schools that pointed out could also mean that TPSs and charter schools are not coupled more or less loosely, but attempt through different means to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the community/ies they serve and are located in. The fact that the guiding statements of charter schools are much more frequently the same across various schools that are part of the same management organizations (district for TPSs) lends some support to the idea of tighter coupling through charter school management organizations or charter holders operating or managing several schools. Similarly, two larger TPS school districts show evidence for less autonomy at the school level and thus tighter

coupling resulting in the exact same guiding statements across school. Still, as some schools add to these guiding statements, loose coupling appears to apply. The interview data presented in the following provides further support for these coupling dynamics.

Interviews with School Leaders

The interviews with the 26 school leaders (12 from TPSs and 14 from charter schools) produced three types of information: The school leaders' framing of the notion of community, their understanding of the policies governing the creation and content of guiding statements and, and their accounts of the creation process for the guiding statements of their school. Together, the interviews provided me with a more comprehensive and detailed picture of the policies as well as local considerations that shape the content of guiding statements as well as the framing of community by each school and school leader. Table 10 provides an overview of the coding for the interview data co-constructed with the school leaders, which also helps follow the description of the data and the discussion. As the school leaders and schools are kept anonymous, I have assigned each a code name, which marks them as TPS or charter school (TPS/C), whether their school's guiding statement addressed community (C = yes / NC = no), and their school's locale. I also assigned them a number so that each school leader has a unique code name that also provides some basic information about them.

As Table 10 shows, five of the 12 interviewees who were TPS leaders represented schools whose guiding statement included the word "community" and this was the case for six out of the 14 charter school leaders. Moreover, it should be noted that except for one case, all charter school leaders work for schools with the locale city or suburb, while

this is only the case for five of the TPS leaders. This difference should be kept in mind when looking at the analysis of the interview data.

Table 10:
Interviewed School Leaders

TPSs	Charter Schools
TPS1 – C/Rural	C1 – C/City
TPS2 – C/Town	C2 – C/City
TPS3 – C/City	C3 – C/City
TPS4 – C/Town	C4 – C/City
TPS5 – C/Town	C5 – C/City
TPS6 – NC/Suburb	C6 – NC/Town
TPS7 – NC/Suburb	C7 – NC/City
TPS8 – NC/Suburb	C8 – NC/City
TPS9 – NC/Rural	C9 – NC/City
TPS10 – NC/Town	C10 – NC/Suburb
TPS11 – NC/Town	C11 – NC/Suburb
TPS12 – NC/Suburb	C12 – NC/Suburb
	C13 – NC/City
	C14 – C/Town

School leaders’ framing of community. Each school leader provided unique responses that will be described in more detail in the following, but a brief overview is provided here. All school leaders acknowledged that the concept of community is important to them and all made the basic differentiation between the community inside the school and outside of the school. Whether or not a school’s guiding statement mentioned community, at least based on the small sample in this study, did not appear to be associated with how the school leaders framed the concept in the interviews and relatively little evidence for differences in coupling between TPSs and charter schools could be identified.

Further, school leaders often struggled to describe what community is for them or how it is addressed in their guiding statement or how it is approached by their school. Rather than interpreting this as a sign of a lack of thought or reflection about the concept,

I attribute this to the general ambiguity and fuzziness of the idea of community, which I described in detail in the Literature Review section. When asking more specific, targeted questions to start the conversation or to help ease confusion in the interviews, a question that always yielded a clear answer was that of “What community do you serve?” Seven (Two TPS and five charter school leaders) out of the 26 principals then defined community first by the ethnic and socio-economic background of students enrolled in their school, thus trying to highlight the needs and diversity (or lack thereof) of their student body: “The surrounding communities have high levels of poverty. It’s primarily white, rural, poor” (C10-NC/Suburb).

Related to this finding, another theme common to the responses by charter school and TPS school leaders was that they acknowledged the complexity of the concept of community or at least struggled to be explicit about how they defined it, several of them noting that there is more than one definition or way in which the school uses the term, as in the following example: “I think community can mean a couple of different things...the community of learning within the [name of the school] walls and certainly engaging our community, yes, our parents for sure, we have significant parental involvement in every area, as well as we try to get businesses involved because it is their community” (TPS3-C/City). TPS3-C/City’s comment here reinforces the major distinction between community inside the school and outside of the school from the guiding statement data, also highlighting how the community outside the school is seen as group beyond parents, including business owner and other actors.

A final shared point mirrors the findings of the guiding statements, where both types of schools frequently featured the idea of the school as a learning community (Code 9), portraying it as an educational community within the school that is focused on certain goals and values. This framing of community was brought up by all TPS and charter school principals:

I think the community within the school is obviously the people who come here and experience the... the instructional normal day, that I would say is the internal part of it...uhh...that are your teachers, your students, and your staff for the most part. (TPS1-C/Rural)

However, as we will see in the following, this definition was much more central to the way in which charter school leaders framed community. The findings presented appear to provide evidence for relatively loose coupling and no apparent differences between TPSs and charter schools. The following section suggests patterns regarding the framing of community by TPS and charter school leaders, first discussing the two groups separately and then comparing the findings.

Traditional public schools. The ways in which the TPS school leaders framed community in the interviews were not uniform, but mirrored the findings of the content analysis of the guiding statements in two major ways: First, in that the school leaders generally defined community geographically (Code 1 in the guiding statement analysis), despite open enrollment, and second, that they focused on the strong ties with the community outside of the school, having a relatively clearly defined local community in mind (similar to codes 7, 10, and 11 for the guiding statements). Their answers suggested

a close relationship with this community, again perhaps as part of a concern for legitimacy.

As a group, TPS school leaders provided a predominantly geographical definition of community: The interviews with 10 of the 12 leaders included a focus on or acknowledgment of the geographical community that the school serves and is located in. A predominantly geographical definition of community was found more often with principals leading schools in places that were defined more clearly geographically:

You know I think the community here is what's really important in [Name of town], we're... a bit isolated, a bit unique... there are families here, probably like a lot of small towns, that have been here for generations. Umm, you know, the more you get to know the school, you go walk around the high school halls, you look at all the old high school yearbook photos, a lot of these people are still in town and some of them work in this district so there is...there is that really tight community bond. (TPS10-NC/Town)

This statement also highlights that most TPS principals positioned the school as part of the community it is located in, with close social ties to members of the community outside of the school, which could be an effort to legitimize its purpose and processes. These close ties between community and school, the school as part of the community, were expressed by most of the TPS principals and perhaps most directly by TPS4-C/TOWN: "We feel that the school is nothing more than an extension of the community." TPS4-C/TOWN added that with these close ties, with being an extension of the community, the school also had to be responsive to the community's needs and wants,

again suggesting a concern for legitimacy. Similarly, TPS3-C/City describes close ties between school and community, positioning the community as “our community,” seeing herself as part of it (“we”):

It’s a very tight-knit community so everyone does have... umm... the students’ best interest at [Name of school] at heart because we know that...umm... it makes our community strong and if you have strong school system, people wanna move in, people wanna stay. So, our community is very aware of that and they’re very actively involved.

In fact, most principals referred to the community they serve as “our community” even though they acknowledged that open enrollment had brought some changes in terms of where their students come from. In addition, six of the 12 TPS principals described the community their school serves as “unique”, a word or notion that was not expressed by any of the charter school principals, which may again suggest differences in coupling between the two groups. While four of these six principals worked in a town locale, TPS12-NC/Suburb and TPS3-C/City also were very clear about the uniqueness of “their” community. Both acknowledged that clearer geographical boundaries helped make the community unique and defined it more clearly.

With a spatial, geographical type of definition, community is typically seen as a singular group of people who have close ties and who share values, ideals, and expectations. However, the area covered by the school could also include more than one community, as in the case of TPS9 – NC/Rural: “Well...our community is five... actually we pull from six different communities..... So, it is tough for us to do a...community....

-based...you know...outcome. We have tried to... we try to consider all our communities, but that's tough sometimes." Notably, while serving more than one community, TPS9 – NC/Rural still used the phrase "our communities" when referring to them, again displaying a close tie to these communities which may partially be emphasized in an attempt to legitimize the school.

The predominantly geographical framing of community was not shared by all: Both TPS7-NC/Suburb and TPS8-NC/Suburb did not focus on geography in the first place. TPS7-NC/Suburb in fact differed sharply from her TPS colleagues in that she explicitly excluded geography from how she defines community, stating that "Geographic boundaries don't define schools anymore." This statement stands in contradiction to the framings of the other school leaders, which she was likely aware of as she added that other principals may not have accepted this yet, and is more aligned with that of charter school principals as we will see below. While acknowledging geographic boundaries as playing a role in how he defined community, TPS1-C/Rural mentioned that "There isn't a geographic boundary as much as you buy into what we do on campus." This reflects the idea of community as those who are part of the school and the educational community within it (Code 9), a way of defining community that was emphasized by TPS7-NC/Suburb and TPS8-NC/Suburb, whose schools are notably in suburbs, i.e. places with less clearly defined geographical boundaries. This observation is underscored by TPS12 – NC/Suburb's comparison between his current school and one he worked at prior:

I think for us, the community in a small town is much... is even more important than it is like when I was at [Name of other school district]. Yes, we served our community, but our community was, you know, from this block to that block in a large metropolitan neighborhood, so you didn't really have as much of a community feel as you do in a place like this.

While pointing out the importance of geographical boundaries to framing community in a spatial way, TPS12 – NC/Suburb's statement also makes it clear that TPSs, even when lacking clearly defined geographical boundaries, are focused on serving the community they are located in. Further, it suggests that school locale may indeed also play a role in how community is framed by school leaders, supporting assumptions that "individual schools as smaller, local educational institutions may be expected to have closer ties to localities and hence articulate mission statements that are more closely attuned to local needs and contexts than to school districts" (Schafft & Biddle, 2013, p. 59). This in turn would support looser coupling of such rural schools as they focus on adapting to local needs.

Charter schools. Unlike TPS school leaders, not a single charter school leader framed the community he or she serves as primarily a geographically limited or at least relatively clearly defined area with a group of people who have close ties among each other and that the school is part of: "We don't limit our population to any particular group. We accept all students. We're not geographically limited either" (C5-C/City) is a statement that is representative of the general initial responses of charter school leaders and suggest inter-group differences in the framing of community. All leaders pointed to

open enrollment as one of the causes for this lack of geographical boundaries for the community they serve, and some shared the large number of zip codes they serve (C3-C/City: 22 and C13-NC/City: 40) with only three school leaders (C6-NC/Town, C9-NC/City, and C14-C/Town) stating that their students from a relatively clearly defined geographical area. However, some did acknowledge that geographical factors played a role in how they define the community they serve, as the example from C11-NC/Suburb shows:

It's not a geographical community, although I grant that the majority of our students come from a 5-mile radius around our school, but there are plenty of exceptions. Umm...I know of families who drive 25 miles to deliver their children to us every day.

Asked where his students come from, C11-NC/Suburb was able to name areas, adding to his description that these areas are essentially created by that fact that other schools from his school's management organization are located nearby. In other words, we can see a phenomenon similar to the geographical definition of a community found with TPSs in some charter school cases as intra-organizational competition does not appear to be desired, thus defining schools from charter school management as likely having relatively clearly defined areas from which they attract students and thus communities they serve. This again seems to suggest loose coupling of charter schools, whose frames for community appear to be more similar between charter schools than when comparing them to TPSs. At the same time, coupling may be relatively tight through the institutional

influence of charter school management organizations who spell out one set of guiding statements for each school under their charter.

While they may not see themselves as focused on or closely connected to the community they are located in, the charter school leaders' statements indicated that they do not ignore this community and may in fact seek out specific communities based on their specific needs: C1-C/City's description of the origin of her charter school suggests an awareness for community needs and at the same time a lack of social ties to this community, positioning the school as a (learning) community within a community, rather than as part of it:

So the community where we are, when we came here, the reason we opened up [Name of school], [name of charter management company] as a management company, was to address the very high drop-out rate in this district. They were top five in the state... one of the high schools. And so we found a need to be able to address that drop-out rate and provide students an alternative to their traditional large high school.

This statement connects to the idea of charter schools as community-based, rising from the needs of the given community, thus legitimizing the school in the eyes of community members. C14-C/Town also emphasized that the roots of his school are community-based as the founders of the school came from the community that the school is located in and C1-C/City stresses the needs of the community as a key factor in the school's functioning as well:

We don't want cookie cutter schools, we wanna make sure that you...that we as school principals are addressing the needs of our community. All of our schools are very different although we fall under the same umbrella, but the expectation for us functioning with quality and safe are the same.

This statement expresses a desire for loose coupling of schools. C12-NC/Suburb, a principal of a school that is part of a national charter school management organization, also notes the responsiveness to community needs: "...all the schools [...] are...have kind of local control, so each school might have a different flavor depending on the community it serves." This particular case indicates the presence of some loose coupling even within an overall system (the charter management organization) that is more tightly coupled.

Instead of framing the school as part of a local community, charter school leaders tended to focus instead on their school's educational community (Code 9 in the coding scheme). They state that rather than being geographically defined, "the community is instead a more academically driven community that is serious about getting the best education for their children" (C11-NC/Suburb). C4-C/City clarified that "district schools exist to serve a community that has specific boundaries, charters exist to... for community and so you've got to define that community before people want to know if they join it or not." She adds "That's what we sell: A small community." C14-C/Town notes: "We kinda fill a specific niche in our community and this is what folks are looking for who come here." Therefore, there is some indication in the interviews that charter school leaders tend to frame community as a group of people that has strong social ties

and unites in their school around a shared set of values, ideals, and expectations and this mission provides legitimacy for their high schools. Again, this provides some limited evidence for isomorphism across the small sample of charter schools.

For some of the charter school leaders, this community is also marked by diversity, again mirroring the analysis of the guiding statements (Code 7):

When you're not a neighborhood school... you are creating, not kind of a set... I don't know that culture is the right word, but you're not a reflection of a particular neighborhood, you know, we're not all out a [place name] school. And so from that you have diversity of experiences as well as...um... you know, just socioeconomic diversity as well. (C7-NC/City)

Moreover, C7-NC/City clearly states that this diversity is the result of having students not just from one particular geographical area. By stating "we're not all out a [place name] school", she seems to suggest that her school is not tightly connected to a particular community, certainly not in the sense of the strong "our community" mindset expressed by several TPS school leaders. This could be seen as a way to legitimize the school through its emphasis on diversity of (geographical) backgrounds. C13-NC/City also stresses that diversity is a key component of her high school:

Compared to some of the other schools that are located in very suburban areas or...uh... remote locations...um... despite our location being kind of in the [identifying information] section of Tucson...uh...we have students from over 40 zip codes commuting to our school. So part of our school...um...specifically within [charter management organization]...uh...part of our culture and

community... um...is really emphasizes and values diversity. And that's because naturally we have teachers and students and school leaders commuting from all sections of town to come together for this common shared purpose.

In her response, C13-NC/City frames the type of community her school fosters as marked by diversity, which she argues other schools in suburban or remote locations do not do. Further, her comment again highlights the focus on the creation of an educational community that centers around the school and its education mission and focus, thus legitimizing the diversity of this community. C13-NC/City goes on to point out that the degree diversity is unique to her school: "So that's something that's very unique about the...our community, is that we have a very diverse population in terms of their socioeconomic background, in terms of their race, religion, political beliefs. It really is an amazing cross-section." However, as mentioned above, diversity in terms of demographics was mentioned and highlighted by other school leaders, especially other charter school leaders, as well.

Finally, like with the guiding statements, charter school leaders tended to emphasize their students' contributions to their community more, again potentially legitimizing the school in the eyes of the public: "With community for them, or for us I mean, is really about understanding that...that upon graduating that their academic success and academic excellence is the way that they give back" (C1-C/City).

While both charter school leaders and TPS leaders talked about creating ties with the community outside of the high school, when asked about how they address community in their school or what it means to them, the charter school leaders generally emphasized the

ways in which they connected to the community outside of the high school, readily listing a variety of activities. They stressed the value of community and mentioned educating their students on how to contribute to their community (C1-C/City, C4-C/City, C9-NC/City; C12-NC/Suburb), again legitimizing their work to the community and engagement with it, frames which are covered by codes 6, 8, and 9 in the guiding statements (students contributing to community, the school supporting community, and school-community partnerships and collaborations). These findings support the assumption of intra-group isomorphism: In the interviews, nine out of 14 charter school leaders (and only two out of 12 TPS school leaders) listed various ways in which the school contributes to the community, including community service, students attending, organizing, or engaging in activities or events outside of the school campus, or the school hosting events or providing facilities for groups within the community, for example as in the following excerpt:

We do...uh...you know, we participate in food drives, we participate in “Pennies for Patients,” the nationwide leukemia drive, [Name of City] has the March of...uhh... ”March of Dimes” program that they do and...so we send a team to that...uhh... we have certain city streets that certain clubs...uh... will take part of as part of the cleaning,...umm...we have national honors society here, which, you know, obviously we’re heavily involved in community service, I think they’re one of the clubs that maintains one of the city streets...uh... it’s kind of through that, through our extra-curric...extra-curricular...uh... clubs is really I think how

we...uh... bridge with the community in different and various ways. (C8-NC/City)

C8-NC/City here lists a few examples for how students contribute to the community outside of the school. As he uses the metaphor of “bridging” to the community, a clear separation of the school from the community outside of the school is portrayed, with the students’ extracurricular activities serving as a means to legitimize the school’s role in this outside community.

With regards to the framing of community, the interviews thus indicated that the Arizona high school leaders in the sample do reflect on community and frame it in generally similar ways, potentially using it to legitimize their schools to the local community and/or greater public. School leaders whose schools’ guiding statements did not feature the term did not respond differently to questions, framing community in the same ways as those whose statements did feature the term. Even if the sample was small this finding suggests that whether or not a school’s guiding statement addresses the idea of community directly does not necessarily reflect on whether or not its administrators and staff consider community an important concept for their school. Thus, this result provides evidence for skeptics who see guiding statements as having little beyond a symbolic, rhetorical function (Allen, 2001).

The policy framework for guiding statements. The school leaders’ comments confirmed the relative absence of state or federal requirements for guiding statements. None of them were aware of any rules, regulations, or guidelines requiring or governing any part of the creation process. As already indicated in the section on the policy

framework governing the creation of guiding statements, charter school leaders pointed to the requirement for charter schools to list a mission statement as part of the charter application, a minimal element of a more centralized system. C3-C/City had more detailed knowledge of the history of the process, placing the requirement for guiding statements within federal and state legislation and programs, portraying the development of tighter coupling for charter schools over the last 20 years as part of a movement toward higher accountability and regulation for charter schools:

When the charter school movement first started in 1996, there was the charter... umm...charter board was ran through the Department of Ed, and there were processes and...and that sort of thing and we...we had to have, you know, the 501...uh...501c3 status and all that sort of thing, so the accountability there, having a mission statement, a vision, uhhh, the curriculum path, that was all in place in 1996 and then it's only been through...uhh...legislation, both federal and state, with NCLB and ESSA, that it has been clarified on criteria for charter schools.

Accrediting agencies, however, were mentioned by the school leaders and appeared to be perceived as effectively leading to tighter coupling, greater centralization or standardization. School leaders generally either brought up themselves or confirmed after me asking them the role of AdvancED, with C1-C/City actually working for AdvancED in addition to her work as a principal. According to her, AdvancED requires schools to have a mission and vision to get accredited, meaning that it is required for the school to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the accreditation organization and thus by

extension the Arizona Department of Education: “So AdvancEd for accreditation requires you to have mission and vision and I am also trained to evaluate schools through AdvancED so I got to accredit, I am on an accreditation team” (C1-C/City). Other school leaders saw it as less of a requirement but as a strong recommendation nonetheless, indicating a tighter coupling than the absence of state or district regulations would perhaps suggest:

Part of AdvancED, what they do ask is that you revisit your vision and mission to make sure that it’s still is what the community wants...that’s part of what the recommendation is...they don’t make you, but that’s part of their recommendation so we’ve done. (TPS3-C/City)

This impression of guiding statements being considered a requirement by principals is reinforced by TPS1-C/Rural, who commented that AdvancED’s reaction would probably to not having a mission or vision would probably be: “What, you don’t have those?”, which is stated most clearly by C14-C/Town:

“Yeah, they...they...they kinda externally compel us to at least...um...uhhh... have the discussions, have the meetings, uhhh...talk about it, and no... if it is agreed upon that no changes are to be made, we...we think it fits and it works, and this is who we are and this is what we do...uh...they’re fine with that, too, just as long as we are going through the process.

The comment by C14-C/Town suggests that representatives of the accreditation agency have a direct influence on what discussions are had made at the school level, thus suggesting tighter coupling. While However, C14-C/Town’s response also suggests that

the final decisions are still made at the school level, thus potentially allowing for loose coupling. The responses of several school leaders, who appear to perceive a similar requirement to have a guiding statement and review (and thus discuss) it also lead to suggesting a coupling of accreditation agency and schools that is perhaps tighter than one might assume given a technically voluntary accreditation. It thus appears that the accreditation process might function as an element of tighter coupling through an agency outside of the public education system. The example below underlines that school leaders do not necessarily view guiding statements as required, but do feel that they are strongly encouraged to have thoughts and perhaps also conversations about them. This could be seen as indicative of tighter coupling as the accrediting agency's requirements and the conversations school leaders have with the agency representatives appear to promote a certain amount of reflection on the school guiding statements

Well, I don't know if I would say it's not required, but it's a component that they're looking at, so... I can kind of...you know, whether it's spelled out...umm...or not, it's something as part of the documentation process...I'm sure that...umm...you know, both the programs, policies, procedures, everything kind of circles around that main priority of the mission statement. (C7 – NC/City)

The same uncertainty and tendency to see the existence of guiding statements as a requirement and thus an element of tighter coupling is pointed out by TPS10 – NC/Town, who also shared that the guiding statements are central to the accreditation process in that they provide a key piece of the evaluation process:

“You know, you’re kind of pushed that way, Constantin, you...requirement is probably... we wouldn’t say “That’s required”, but...but in order to be...uh... accredited, which, almost all schools, all public schools are going through, you know, it’s a five year process, they’re gonna push you to have a strategic plan. And it’s not that you’re not gonna be uhhh accredited, but they’re gonna... you’re risking it the next time around if you don’t have a strategic plan, you don’t go through the process of having a strategic plan.

One principal, TPS9-NC/Rural also described that the guiding statements are in fact required for federal and state funding requirements, again highlighting that while not explicitly required, guiding statements “do help” and are “highly suggested,” or a less direct way of accomplishing greater centralization and thus tighter coupling:

Well, uhhhh, they do help with some of the requirements that we do have as far as uhh, Title 1s...some other state funds, federal state funding, uhh things that we have going on like through [Inaudible]. They say they’re not required, but they’re highly...suggested that we have them

One school leader stated that she did some research herself on guiding statements when preparing to revise her school’s and could not find any requirements or regulations in Arizona. Generally speaking, however, the review of the policy documents was confirmed by the school leaders: The charter school application requires a mission of charter schools, while AdvancED’s accreditation process assumes the existence of mission and vision statements and required school leaders to engage with their guiding statements. Further, the accreditation process is seen as similar to a requirement for

having guiding statements by the principals, suggesting the presence of tighter coupling regarding guiding statements not from governmental organizations, but from the non-governmental accrediting agencies. However, as the following section will suggest, high schools in Arizona still appear to have a lot of autonomy concerning the content of the guiding statements and the creation and revision processes.

The creation and revision of guiding statements. The principals' descriptions of the creation and revision of their schools' guiding statements were marked by relatively similar accounts which suggest loose coupling (due to a lack of federal, state, or district policies) as procedures and time frames varied for the creation, review, and in some cases revision of guiding statements and typically were tied to the school leader, exhibiting a variety of local adaptations. This fits into Weick's (1976) observation that in loosely coupled systems, schools "potentially can retain a greater number of mutations and novel solution" (p. 7) and are "a good system for local adaptation." (p. 6). Schools are expected or required to behave in broadly similar ways, but develop their own approaches: For schools that had been opened relatively recently (within the last two decades), i.e. all charter schools (although three of them were from the first group of charter schools in Arizona in the mid-1990s) and four TPSs, the interviewed school leader knew the person(s) who had created the original guiding statements or leaders had at least an idea of who had been involved. Charter school leaders knew when the guiding statement(s) had been created because they either were one of the founders or because they knew or had some information about the founder: "So that would have been the original group...uh...we had four families who originally created the charter and that was

[inaudible] by that team” (C4-C/City) or “[Name] was the founder...uh...and so he came up with that...uh...you know we started . If he didn’t...I’m pretty sure he came up with that...uh...you know, when we started the school” (C8-NC/City). For TPSs, principals often only knew that the guiding statements had been in place when they arrived, but not who created them or how they were created: “I couldn’t tell you how long it’s been here” (TPS11-NC/Town). In only one case for TPSs and four for charter schools, the principals had been involved in the creation of the school’s guiding statements.

The main reason for this phenomenon was that school leaders had not been at the school for very long: 10 out of 12 TPS school leaders had been in a leadership position at their current school for one to five years, an example being TPS10-NC/Town: “I’ve only been here for two years so I don’t know when it was chosen. It’s been here for a long time from what I can tell, so I don’t know the process.” While most TPS school leaders had only been in their position for less than five years, 10 out of 14 charter school leaders, among them three founders and one current owner of the charter, had been their school’s leadership for more than five years.

Despite the experience on the charter school leader side in particular, only two TPS principals (TPS3-C/City and TPS7 – NC/Suburb) and two charter school leaders (C6-NC/Town and C9 – NC/City) had participated in substantial revisions of their school’s guiding statements, but all school leaders reported having critically revisited the existing guiding statements at least once, with about half mentioning minor adjustments:

Well, yeah, you know, because view points change just like your own personal goals change a little bit, so you kinda gotta step and take a look just to make sure

that you're... you're still addressing them or tweaking them a little bit. (TPS9-NC/Rural)

The decision to review/revisit as well as revise the guiding statements was typically motivated internally according to the principals and in one case due to a major turnover in staff (C6-NC/Town), with some referencing AdvancED's accrediting procedures as an additional factor:

Part of AdvancED, what they do ask is that you revisit your vision and mission to make sure that it's still is what the community wants...that's part of what the recommendation is...they don't make you, but that's part of their recommendation so we've done that. (TPS3-C/City)

This statement not only indicates the role that AdvancED's accrediting process plays in the revision of the guiding statements, but it also is another example for how a TPS is framed as having close ties to the local community. Further, TPS9 – NC/Rural suggests that guiding statements may have received more attention at the administrative level in the last two decades. It should be noted, however, that the other school leaders, having spent shorter times in office (based on the information they provided themselves in the interviews) did not point to such changes in the level of attention.

TPS9 – NC/Rural: As far as I can tell we've always had them. I know they take...they took more precedence, they started focusing on them more about, oh, 15 years ago...umm, you know, they started..."

Researcher: 15...15 years ago you said?

TPS9 – NC/Rural: Right around 15 years ago...

Researcher: Uhumm.. Okay...

TPS9 – NC/Rural: Somewhere right around 15 years ago, they started focusing on them a little bit more...uh.. and so since then, I know we've...we've addressed them every, like I've said, every few years, three, four years.

Researcher: Okay, that makes a lot of sense...ummm...and you feel like that focus came from...the outside, from state department, from ummm anything else, or what was the impetus for that back then?

TPS9 – NC/Rural: Well, I think it was just a matter of we wanted to get better, so you gotta, gotta set those types of visions and goals for yourself.

However, none of the other school leaders commented on such an increased focus on guiding statements. As only of three leaders (two TPS; one charter) had been in their current position for 15 or more years they could not provide such a longitudinal perspective on guiding statements.

Notably, three TPS principals (TPS1-C/Rural and TPS4-C/Town) mentioned that the school's close ties to the community in fact had so far made them avoid revising the guiding statements, as community members voiced the desire to keep the current guiding statements: "We're a very old, conservative little town here in [Name of town] and so most everybody here is 'If it's not broke, don't fix it,' you know" stated TPS4-C/Town, again highlighting by using the word "we" that the school is an integral part of the community. No charter school leaders mentioned such outside involvement, suggesting that their coupling with their local community is much looser as they act more

autonomously while at least the TPS principals mentioned above feel that they have to react to the desires of the local community outside of the school. One charter school leader spoke directly to the higher degree of autonomy in decision-making, noting that “Because we are our own charter and we’re our own district, we don’t have specific ties to...you know, we’re not a big... a part of a bigger system. We are our own system.” (C7-NC/City). Given the general autonomy and the focus on the educational community within the school, looser coupling does indeed appear to apply when compared to TPSs.

The findings from the interviews thus indicate that the school leaders operate in relatively loosely coupled systems with regards to guiding statements and their approaches to community: The school leaders reported having their own, unique approaches to the creation of guiding statements and also did not indicate being limited in their choice of content by any state or district regulations. Further, their frames for community appeared to mirror those of the guiding statements, with the general similarities being more notable than the relatively small differences between the TPS and charter school leaders. There is some evidence for tighter coupling regarding the creation and content of guiding statement in the form of the AdvanceEd accreditation process. Finally, charter school leaders express a higher autonomy from the local community that the school is located in, stating that the guiding statement revision is generally not influenced by community members, but instead by the charter founders and owners/operators, including charter management organizations.

Comparison of Guiding Statements and Interviews

To summarize the preceding sections and transition to a discussion of the findings focusing on loose coupling and legitimacy, it is helpful to highlight the main findings of the analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews. Similar frames for community emerged from both sets of data: Just like in the guiding statements, the distinction between the learning community within the school (Code 9) and other frames for community outside of the school was evident in the school leaders' comments, with no apparent differences between TPSs and charter schools for either set of data. Moreover, the interviews with the school leaders generally mirrored the absence of geographical frames of community (Codes 1 and 2), even though some school leaders pointed out that for TPSs this geographical definition is still relevant. Further, while not frequently explicitly acknowledged, the school leaders generally portrayed community as a value, which we do see in some of the guiding statements as well (Code 3).

The analyses of guiding statements and interviews both suggested that high schools in Arizona frame community in ways that suggest different concerns about legitimacy: TPS guiding statements and TPS school leaders appear to emphasize close ties to the local community outside of the school, be it through regular collaboration (Code 10), the use of the phrase "our community" (Code 11) or the use of local geographical markers/identifiers (Code 1). In the interviews, close ties between school and the local community outside of the school are consistently highlighted, although the example of school leader TPS7-NC/Suburb suggests that there are TPS school leaders

whose frames for community do not feature geographical boundaries or do so to a lesser extent than before the introduction of open enrollment in Arizona.

On the other hand, the frames for community in charter school guiding statements and interviews with charter school leaders suggests that charter schools/charter school leaders may legitimize their school by highlighting its (i.e., student and school staff's) contributions to the community outside of the school (Codes 6 and 8). In both charter school guiding statements and interviews we see community framed as more diverse (Code 7). In the charter school guiding statements, unlike in the interviews, we also frequently see another difference between TPSs and charter schools: charter schools more often frame community in a way that seemingly distances them from the community outside of the school. They put more emphasis than TPSs on how the community outside of the school is tied to the student as opposed to being closely connected to the school (Code 4).

The study of the interviews also allowed access to the framing of community by school leaders whose schools did not feature the term “community” in their guiding statements. The interviews thus helped explore the framing of community in more depth after the analysis of the guiding statements, suggesting that there are no qualitative differences regarding the framing of community between Arizona high schools whose guiding statements included community and those that did not. However, a larger sample size may change this finding.

Of course, the interviews also added information about the creation process of high school guiding statements, providing insights that the analysis of the guiding

statements could not yield. The interviews helped to understand the school leader's motivations for creating guiding statements and for choosing particular content, adding the perspectives of practitioners to the review of the policy documents that govern the creation of guiding statements. Moreover, they highlighted the role of AdvancED in this process, as school leaders frequently mentioned the accreditation organization as a regulating influence on the creation of guiding statements.

Loose Coupling and Legitimacy

Loose coupling theory predicts the observed basic similarities in the ways different schools, in this case high schools across a whole state and across school type (TPS vs. charter), frame the notion of community. This explanation assumes that schools adjust to societal expectations, to ideas within the community outside the high school about what the values and goals of the high school should be. Thus, isomorphism in the case of the guiding statements may not be created not through regulations, but through societal expectations, to which schools respond in largely symbolic ways in order to obtain legitimacy (Aurini, 2012; Kleinman & Osley-Thomas, 2014; Pogodzinski, 2016). Based on the interviews, there is indeed some evidence for loose coupling at the district/charter management organization level, with regulations and procedures regarding the creation of guiding statements varying from district to district and charter to charter. The policy documents and the analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews suggested that TPSs and charter schools were generally marked by a large amount of principal autonomy. The policy documents did not outline requirements for guiding statement content and only relatively indirect requirements for a guiding

statement at all, which the school leaders confirmed in the interviews, although they highlighted the increasing influence of AdvanceEd accreditation regulations. The guiding statements were largely unique, though a small number of TPSs featured the same guiding statements and a larger number of charter schools from the same charter management organization had the same guiding statements. Similarly, one TPS leader mentioned more autonomy at his current school when compared to working as an assistant principal in another school district:

So, like when I was at [school district] we had our [school district] plan and that was something that the district, the strategic plan handed down to us and we had to find ways to implement those pieces in our school and... In a small we have a lot more flexibility to do... you know, kinda what we think, you know, is best for our school. (TPS12-NC/Suburb)

Based on the analysis of the policy documents and the interviews, there are no policies or regulations from the side of the governmental agencies that govern guiding statements or how community is framed. As Fusarelli (2002) points out, similarities across schools have to be expected as “educational organizations contain elements of all three [forms of isomorphism], so it is not surprising that schools in widely-scattered locales should so closely resemble one another (Rowan and Miskel, 1999)” (p. 568). Yet, there was no evidence of tight coupling regarding guiding statements or frames for community. In the described policy environment, coercive isomorphism, i.e. similarities caused by regulations and mandates, rewards or punishments, does not seem to be at work. However, normative isomorphism, through professional codes and standards,

certification and accreditation requirements, may occur as AdvancED's accreditation process appears to be the only external process requiring schools to engage with their guiding statements. Further, principal training is likely to include a discussion of the value and content of guiding statements, which was noted by one of the principals (C1 – C/City). The third form of isomorphism central to New Institutionalism (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Meyer 1980; DiMaggio & Powell 1983), that of mimetic isomorphism, schools copying each other, can certainly be at play: Guiding statements are publicly displayed, and principals and other decision makers can easily find inspiration for their own guiding statements. Yet, such practices were not apparent from the data.

Despite educational reforms and policy changes since the 1980s, there is then relatively little evidence from this study (which admittedly is focused on high school policies and procedures that only comprise a small part of the overall school operations, in addition to other limitations discussed below) that suggests the existence of tighter coupling in the form of increasing mandates and top-down control structures by the federal and state governments or “educational reforms, such as higher standards, testing, and accountability, [that] seek to improve student achievement through tightened centralized control” (Fusarelli, 2002, p. 562). In the dataset, two TPS school districts and one third of charter high schools operated by charter management organizations had only one set of guiding statements. This finding may be indicative of tighter coupling, i.e. greater centralized control, especially through charter school management organizations as relatively new actors in the U.S. education system. Further support from this comes from the cases of C11-NC/Suburb and C13-NC/City who had no active involvement or

voice in the creation of their school's guiding statement, which was created by the management organization for all schools that are part of the group. Additionally, C4/C-City, C5-C/City, C9-NC/City and C14-C/Town made it clear that their guiding statements were not unique to one of their schools, but to all of the schools under the same charter (in some cases including elementary and/or middle schools) because they focus on a particular educational mission and vision, rather than the individual community/ies the school is located in or serves.

It has to be noted that the other charter school principals generally reported a relatively large degree of autonomy from school districts or any other authority (with the exception of the mentioned influence of AdvancED) regarding the creation and content of guiding statements and the ways in which schools approach the idea of community. Compared to their TPS counterparts, the interviews with the charter school leaders suggested more diverse internal organization and procedures, including the creation of guiding statements. These results could be seen as indicative of a higher prevalence and perhaps also higher degree of loose coupling within the group of charter schools. They also appear to support the findings from the guiding statements that indicated nuanced inter-group differences between TPSs and charter schools with regards to their framing of community which could be interpreted as evidence for differences in coupling between the two school types.

As stated before, the analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews suggests that there are basic isomorphic elements in the framing of community by TPSs and charter high schools in Arizona: Both guiding statements and school leaders

frequently distinguish between community outside of the school, a frame we can call “the local community” frame. This frame highlights the group of people who live around the school, who are (at least potentially) served by the school, and who the school connects to through community service or business/stakeholder connections. The guiding statements and interviews of both TPS and charter high schools also frequently feature a frame of community that focuses on the educational community in the school, one we can call “school as community.” Both TPSs and charter schools find it important to stress that their school promotes close ties and shared goals and expectations between all members of this community: “The mission of Desert View HS is to develop a community of learners in which all students are valued for their uniqueness and provided the opportunity to achieve their personal best” (TPS) and “City High School strives to be a community of learners in which all members use their minds well and care about one another” (charter school).

These similarities could be explained through the consideration of best practices in school leadership as well as cultural expectations for schools, i.e. loose coupling, rather than policies or directives that are part of a policy paradigm increasingly exerting more centralized governance of education (tight coupling). This study suggests that, at least in Arizona, policies regarding guiding statement content do not exist, with the non-governmental organization AdvancED’s accreditation standards being perceived by school leaders as the only explicit, school-external document and process that requires them to engage (meaning review and potentially revise) with their guiding statements on a regular basis. This process then could, as mentioned above, lead to normative

isomorphism, even if AdvancED does not mandate written requirements regarding guiding statement creation or content.

Despite support for the existence of basic isomorphism, the analysis also suggests that there are some differences in the findings indicating that TPSs and charter high schools in Arizona differ in their framing of community: In the TPS guiding statements and interviews with TPS school leaders, community is more likely to be framed in geographical terms and as a close-knit group of people that the TPS is part of and serves, as for example in the following guiding statement: “We believe that our school belongs to the community with education being a cooperative effort among students, faculty, staff, parents, and community.” The TPS guiding statements and interviews also highlight the support and contribution to the community outside of the school, but there appears to be less of a need to do so, especially for schools in smaller, more distinctly geographically defined communities:

“When I was at [Name of other school district], you know, our boundaries were [street name] to [street name] and from this street to that street. Well, if you go one street over you’re really in the same community so it’s, it’s just a little blurred. I think the lines where here, you know, our newspaper follows everything we do. So like when we have a student gets an award for something, come down, take their picture, it’s in the paper. When our teams win the state championship, you know, it’s a big deal in our town because it’s very unique, so I think when you have those set borders and you have, you know, a school that represents the town”
(TPS12-NC/Suburb)

TPS12-NC/Suburb here portrays a school-community relationship marked by the school being a part of the community, one that represents the community. Situated in such communities and representatives of the local government, many TPSs refer to “our community,” a community (or communities) that is typically relatively clearly defined by a geographical area and that the school sees as having very close ties to, as in the following two guiding statements: “We will build strong, lasting relationships with our students, parents, staff, and community” and “...we are committed to being excellent in all that we do and we consistently represent our schools and our community in a positive way”. We can call this the “school as a member of community” frame. This frame is also used by TPS in cities and suburbs, but as TPS12-NC/Suburb’s comments show, there are differences between schools in smaller and larger cities.

The analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews with the charter high school leaders suggested that different frames for community were used more frequently. The overarching frame describing these differences can be called “school as a contributor to community.” The charter schools in Arizona examined in this study frame community as a service that charter schools provide in the form of a learning community with shared ideals and expectations (“school as community”). Charter schools support this framing of community as an institution and through the work of their students, as the example from C14-C/Town indicates: “We should be getting our...our boots on the ground and marching outside of our campuses and heading into our...heading into our communities to see what it is that we can do.” C14-C/Town goes on to highlight that his school is involved in 25 different projects with the community outside of the school. These

statements emphasize again that charter high schools in Arizona typically do not see themselves as serving a community defined by geographical coherence or existing strong social ties between community members. Rather, charter schools emphasize the contributions that they and their students' make to community outside of the school, legitimizing themselves in the eyes of the public through these activities. Even a school leader who uses the frame of "school as a member of community," which we find more frequently with TPSs, appears to acknowledge that charter schools do not have the same legitimacy that TPSs enjoy. C12-NC/Suburb's statement that "We are trying to be a community member" appears to implicitly acknowledge that his school has to make an effort to be recognized as a community member, lacking the long-standing ties of some TPS such as the one of TPS10-NC/Town who, as already mentioned above, notes that "that really tight community bond." To summarize the findings, it can be stated that both the analysis of the guiding statements and the interviews produced findings that suggest that similar frames for community can be found in guiding statements and interviews with school leaders for the dataset of TPS and charter high schools in Arizona. The frames found in guiding statements and the interviews with school leaders showed similarities in the frequency in which most frames were identified for both types of schools, suggesting isomorphism across schools and school types. However, there may be basic, potentially systematic differences, as the overarching "school as a contributor to community" frame can be more frequently found with TPSs while the "school as community" frame appears to be more often identifiable in charter school guiding statements and interviews.

That being said, it has to be stated that the findings of the studies suggested tendencies, rather than clearly defined differences, in the framing of the concept of community. One clear example of this is that we can find all identified frames in guiding statements from both TPS and charter high schools. Nonetheless, it can be stated that TPS and charter schools differed in subtle, yet potentially general ways, in their framing of community. The reasons for this finding cannot be identified in this study, but it may stem from an effort to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the community outside of the school.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As would be predicted by the loose coupling approach, the frames of community suggest patterns of isomorphism across all schools in the sample. However, there is some evidence for systematic differences between traditional public schools and charter schools. The results of this study indicate that there are similarities in the ways in which traditional public high school and charter high school leaders frame the notion of community. Community indeed appears “sited at all levels of schooling, and for vastly different purposes and aims” (Gereluk, 2006, p. 39). The number of frames for community is limited in both the guiding statements and in the interviews collected for this study, despite, or, as a loose coupling theorist would argue, because of the absence of a clear policy framework specific to the concept of community or the content of guiding statements. It instead appears as if more general, overarching policy structures at the state and charter management organization levels lead to looser and tighter coupling that affects guiding statement content and specifically frames for community. While these finding suggests that high schools in Arizona are relatively loosely coupled to school districts and the state department of education (with some exceptions, most notably those of charter school management organizations) regarding the framing of community, it has to be emphasized that tighter coupling may exist in other areas of school operations.

The frames for community identified in this study indicated that schools appear to generally promote the notion of community in the form of shared ideals and expectations inside of the school, as well as social ties and mutual support with the members of the

community outside of the school (“the local community”). The guiding statements of high schools and interviews with high school leaders also indicated that these features of community are desired within the school (“school as community”) as well as in the community outside of the school. In both TPS and charter school guiding statements and interviews, the “school as community” frame was frequently cited and discussed, focusing on a community inside the school that shares certain values and (educational) expectations.

However, this study also suggested that differences in the framing of community by school type may exist. Perhaps due to having a clearly defined community, TPSs tend to frame themselves more often as part of the community they are located in (“school as a member of community”), which could function as a way of obtaining legitimacy in the eyes of the members of this community. The lines between the school and the local community it is located in are often blurry, as TPS high schools in Arizona frequently portray themselves as an extension or integral part of their local communities, even in the age of open enrollment and charter schools.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that the charter schools in the dataset approach “the local community” outside of the school more frequently than TPSs through the overarching frame of “school as a contributor to community,” i.e. through the support their “school as community” provides. This framing can be interpreted as putting greater distance between the “school as community” on the one hand and “the local community” on the other hand. As highlighted in the guiding statements and interviews, the school still contributes to the local community in various ways. However, the focus in the

interviews with charter school leaders in particular appeared to be on the “school as community” frame. The contributions of the school to “the local community” could be interpreted as a means for legitimizing the school in the eyes of members of this local community, rather than an effort to become an extension or integral part of this community. More important for charter school leaders than for TPS leaders was the “school as community” frame. This frame can add to a school’s legitimization efforts in that it appears to seek such legitimization primarily from those who are part of the school community (students, administrators, teachers, staff, and potentially parents) and those closely connected to it (parents, relatives, certain residents of the area surrounding the school, etc.). This interpretation is supported by the fact that many of the charter school leaders interviewed here stated that geographical boundaries do not apply to schools anymore or apply to a lesser extent. They instead promoted their particular model of “school as community:” “That’s what we sell. A small community” (C4-C/City).

The precise reasons for these differences cannot be identified on the basis of the collected data due to the limitations discussed in the Methodology chapter as well as below. However, many charter high schools’ frames of community are possibly different from those of TPS high schools in Arizona due to them being more loosely coupled: charter schools do not have the primary function of serving a specific geographical community, but instead one they can create themselves, forming their own brand of “school as community” which helps establish legitimacy with the general public. This particular educational community, which includes select stakeholders, then can also engage with “the local community” based on the charter schools’ mission and focus.

Traditional public high schools in Arizona, even in times of open enrollment, generally still have the mission of serving a specific area and thus have to work with the local community they are located in. This situation may be changing slowly as some of the TPS principals' comments in this study suggested, but it is still the reality. Thus, it may be the case that charter schools operate in a different sub-system of K-12 education in Arizona which is more loosely coupled, with different and even fewer requirements, than that in which TPSs operate. Charter school leaders and stakeholders then could navigate this somewhat different set of regulations in different ways from TPS school leaders. These common interests and requirements for each school type then create isomorphism within the groups of TPSs and charter schools and more limited isomorphism between these two groups.

At the same time, the underlying isomorphism of frames of community across all Arizona high schools in this dataset may be due to high schools in Arizona being relatively loosely coupled with regards to guiding statements. The general lack of an explicit regulatory framework for the creation and content of guiding statements supports this explanation. While the accreditation process could be seen as leading to normative isomorphism through the establishment of standards, the current study does not provide enough data to support this assumption as it was not in the focus of the research questions, a limitation that future studies can address.

However, TPSs and charter schools again may differ slightly with regards to loose coupling: many charter schools appear more tightly coupled than TPSs as one third of all charter schools in the dataset featured the exact same guiding statements for all schools

under the same charter or charter management organization. At the same time, some charter school leaders noted a great degree of autonomy in their decision-making, including the creation and content of guiding statements or their framing of community. Differences between TPSs seemed subtler as only the schools of two larger school districts and a handful of very small school districts featured such uniformity in guiding statements. Therefore, while there is diversity within both groups (TPSs and charter schools), the group of charter schools appears to be more diverse with regards to structures and processes. This diversity of structures and processes is in line with other research highlighting the diversity within the group of charter schools (for example, Fox & Wolf, 2015; Ertas & Roch, 2014). Schools operated by charter management organization in particular appear more tightly coupled, frequently exhibiting the exact same guiding statements.

The limited findings of this study suggest that TPSs, perhaps particularly those serving more clearly defined geographical areas, may seek to obtain legitimacy from both (2), the community outside of the school and (3), (extended) members of the school community. Many charter schools, on the other hand, may be primarily focused on being legitimate in the eyes of the members of the school community. Underlying this study was the assumption that guiding statements outline ideas which “provide important templates that guide policy action” (Mehta, 2013, p. 291), meaning that the frames provide the foundation for policy action by school leaders and others influenced by the guiding statements. The impact of the current educational policy paradigm on high schools has supposedly led to a tightening of the coupling of actors in the U.S. school

system, but high school leaders, staff, and local stakeholders may also still act in loosely coupled systems at the school level, at least with regards to certain processes and procedures such as their framing of community. As Weick (1976) points out, “a loosely coupled system may be a good system for localized adaptation,” (p. 6) thus providing a potential explanation for idiosyncrasies at the school-level.

This study contributes in a variety of ways to the knowledge of stakeholders in the field of education. First, both these stakeholders and the general public can gain a better understanding of how schools approach the notion of community at a time where school choice has changed the traditional notion of education by zip code, i.e. location of the student’s home, and where a larger paradigm change has contributed to a heightened focus on schools. These insights can serve as a basis for discussion of how schools should approach community, both within and outside of the school. Regarding the use of guiding statements, the findings may provide practitioners with an opportunity to reflect on the content and creation process of their school’s guiding statement and the policy paradigms affecting them in their work, as well as their understanding of their schools’ relationships with their local community.

The findings indicate that high schools in Arizona may use two different major ways of legitimizing their work via the concept of community: framing the “school as a member of community” or the “school as a contributor to community,” TPSs tend to legitimize themselves through the first frame, probably due to strong ties to communities which can be more easily defined. The “school as a contributor to community” frame was found more often with charter schools and this framing may contribute to legitimizing

charter schools' functions through contributions to local communities, but also through the creation of a specific, particular "school as community" notion that everyone can become a part of by joining the school. Certainly, this frame of "school as community" can be found with TPSs also, but it seems to appear more often in combination with the "school as a member community" frame. This finding can be seen as supporting the idea that the relationship of TPSs to the communities they are located is marked by closer social ties.

Policy Implications

What, then, are the policy implications of these findings? First, school leaders in general should be encouraged to reflect on their understanding of the notion of community: As school leader TPS7-NC/Suburb puts it, "geographic boundaries don't define schools anymore." At least in states with charter schools and open enrollment policies it is problematic to think of schools as serving specific geographical communities. This is because such a frame of mind may lead to a given school focusing on a particular area and the characteristics of the students coming from it, thus limiting the school's ability to consider the background of all of its students. Arizona, outside of the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas, features many smaller, geographically isolated communities, and, as mentioned before, the fact that charter schools in Arizona are concentrated in these two metropolitan areas may also mean that school locale affects the findings of this study, a significant limitation of this study.

Based on the findings, both TPSs and charter schools appear to desire a strong sense of community within their schools. The fact that this was the most frequently

mentioned frame in the guiding statements of both TPSs and charter schools also suggests that the creation of a community with shared ideals and expectations seems to be one of the isomorphic elements of frames of community across school type. This interpretation fits with Weick's (1995) observation that in loosely coupled systems, schools attempt to gain control over core values. As it is part of the goal of high schools in Arizona and the United States to create a strong community within the school, the problem for high schools in Arizona perhaps is the one presented by Merz and Furman (1997): they

wrestle with the problem of commitment and stability. If we are free to choose our associates at will, and we have a great number of options available, how can we build community that is stable and reliable, gives us a sense of belonging, and allows us to socialize our youth and order our lives? (p. 23)

TPSs cannot choose their associates; they are assigned to them. One could then interpret the findings of this study in the following way: Aware of this situation, TPSs tend to frame community not only as a value, but as a geographically defined group of people with close social ties that they, the schools, are a part of. Nonetheless, they also invest in the "school as community" frame so they can build a stable and reliable community within the walls of their schools. Charter schools also predominantly frame community through this "school as community" frame, possibly due to the same reasoning. However, they can more actively choose the members of this community as they are not tied to a specific geographical area. Instead of seeing themselves as an integral part of the local community outside of the school in a clearly defined geographical sense, they appear to

choose to contribute to the stability of the local community through community service and other outreach activities.

Commitment and stability, as Merz and Furman (1997) point out, are the central problems with regards to community that schools try to address in the 21st century, as communities are less frequently marked by these two characteristics and the sense of belonging and close ties that come with them. The question that researchers, policy makers, school leaders, and the public should ask themselves is how schools should frame community, and specifically how they should engage with the community/ies outside of the school and contribute to the stability of this community. What are the desirable frames for community given open enrollment and given greater diversity within many communities? Should TPSs see themselves less as an extension of the community in an effort to be able to serve a more diverse group of students better? Does this depend on each school's individual situation, so that a loosely coupled system is needed as it allows for idiosyncratic localized approaches, as for example in situations where schools serve distinctly geographically defined communities? Do charter schools provide the desirable model with their focus on "school as a community" first and then "school as a contributor to community," selecting who and what to engage with? Should there be different approaches between TPSs and charter schools? TPSs and charter schools may currently frame the notion of community differently and perhaps more uniquely at the individual school level, but ultimately the questions and challenges stated above are central to both types. This is because the continuing development of the U.S K-12

education system depends on schools' ability to continue to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the communities they serve.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study are preliminary and exploratory in nature. Guiding statements are documents limited in scope and length and only half of the guiding statements in the dataset actually addressed community directly. The number of interviews with principals was not large enough to propose generalizations about how high school leaders in Arizona frame community. Therefore, I could only contribute limited insights into how the concept of community is approached by high schools today.

Future research on this topic might utilize a qualitative approach focusing on incorporating a greater variety of documents and stakeholders in and around schools, perhaps even using ethnographic methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how TPSs and charter schools frame community. Such a study could elaborate on the relatively nuanced differences between TPSs and charter schools found in this study as well as provide a more in-depth description of the different frames of community used in schools in the United States. On the basis of the findings of such studies, school-community relationships could be clarified and improved, which appears vital given that the traditional education by zip code model is quickly changing if not disappearing, raising a new generation of parents who themselves will have different understanding of school-community relationships.

Further, the observed differences in the framing of community could be associated with whether or not the community served by a school has distinct natural

and/or political boundaries. However, given that charter schools, at least in Arizona, are concentrated in cities and suburban locales, it is difficult to conduct a systematic analysis of this. Certainly, the data for this study suggested that such clear boundaries play a role, i.e. that the characteristics of the community which the school is located in shape the way in which the school frames community.

Perhaps the differences noted in this study are also not surprising given the more specialized purpose of charter schools, which create learning communities not primarily based on zip code, but rather on educational values. How this changes local communities and the ties between people, as students from the same neighborhood attend different schools, and parents thus connect with other parents, is another question worth exploring as the fragmentation of traditional geographical communities marked by strong social ties continues to be lamented.

Finally, it appears worth exploring in more detail how loose and tight coupling applies to charter schools as the findings in this study may suggest that there are differences between traditional public schools and charter schools. This possibility for further research also applies to the additional variation within both groups, as larger TPS districts appeared to operate in more tightly coupled ways while on the charter school side schools with charter school management organizations seemed to operate in more tightly coupled systems. Ultimately, the goal is to better understand whether or not these differences exist and how they affect those served by schools.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Guiding Questions:

1. What major themes do you think are addressed in your school's guiding statement(s)?
 - a. Why do you think the themes or values we can find in the guiding statements were chosen?
 - b. Are any missing that you feel are important?
2. How do you see community being addressed or represented in the guiding statement(s)?
 - a. What community or different communities do you see addressed in these guiding statement(s)?
 - b. Why do you think community is (not) addressed in these guiding statement(s)?
 - c. If the notion of community is not addressed in the guiding statement(s), how do you think your school approaches it?
 - d. Can you describe the community that you are serving?
3. If one set of guiding statements for all schools in the district/organization: It appears that all the schools in your district/organization have the same guiding statement(s). Is that correct? If so, what was the thinking behind that decision (if you know)?

Creation and Revision Questions:

1. When were your school's guiding statements originally created? (Do you know?)
2. Why were the guiding statements created? (Do you know?)
3. To your knowledge, who was involved in the creation of your school's guiding statements?
 - a. Where there any other (external) influences on the creation of the guiding statement and/or its content?
4.
 - a. If the interviewee was involved in the creation or revision of the guiding statement(s):
 - i. Could you describe the process of creation for the guiding statement(s)? For example, did you create it/them together in a meeting or did one person create a draft that was then revised, etc.
 - ii. How long did the process of creating the guiding statement(s) take?
 - iii. What kinds of issues were discussed in the process of creating the guiding statement(s)?
 - iv. To your knowledge, where there any other (external) influences on the creation of the guiding statement(s)?
 - b. If the interviewee was not involved in the creation or revision of the guiding statement(s):

- i. When you came to this school, did you consider re-writing or revising the guiding statement(s)? Why/why not?
5. Do you know how frequently your school's guiding statement(s) have been revised?
 - a. If so, how often?
 - b. Why were the guiding statement revised?
 - c. Can you please describe the changes that were made?

Demographic Questions:

1. For how long have you been in this position?
2. For how long have you been at this school (if different)?
3. For how long have you worked as a principal/school leader (including time in similar positions at other schools)?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Constantin Schreiber grew up in Dorsten, Germany, graduating from the Gymnasium Petrinum in Dorsten. He then went on to study at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster, Germany. He graduated with a Bachelor Hons. in English for Literature and Cultural Studies from Staffordshire University in Stoke-on-Trent in 2006 after a one-year program in cooperation with the Uni Münster. From there, he went to Ball State University through an exchange program between Ball State and the Uni Münster. After one exchange year, he started a Masters program in Linguistics & TESOL at Ball State University, graduating in 2009. Following a year of working as a full-time ESL instructor at Ball State, Constantin then started a Masters program in International Affairs at the Pennsylvania State University in 2010, graduating in 2012 and moving to Tempe, Arizona to start a PhD program in Educational Policy and Evaluation.