Winter 1-6-2012

Gentrification and school choice: Where goes the neighborhood?

Amy Childers Roberts
Georgia State University

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, GENTRIFICATION AND SCHOOL SELECTION: WHERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD?, by AMY CHILDERS ROBERTS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

_____
Richard D. Lakes, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

_____
Sheryl A. Gowen, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Patricia A. Carter, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Katherine B. Hankins, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Date

_____
Sheryl A. Gowen, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Educational Policy Studies

_____
R.W. Kamphaus, Ph.D.
Dean and Distinguished Research Professor
College of Education

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quotation, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education's director of graduate studies and research, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must solely be for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

_____

Amy Childers Roberts

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Amy Childers Roberts
1069 Browns Neck Road
Wellfleet, MA 02667

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Richard Davis Lakes
Department of Educational Policy Studies
College of Education
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303-3083

VITA

Amy Childers Roberts

ADDRESS: 1069 Browns Neck Road
Wellfleet, MA 02667

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. 2011	Georgia State University Educational Policy Studies
M.A. 1998	University of Kansas Education
B.A. 1993	University of Kansas Spanish & Latin American Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2010 – Present	Teacher, Spanish Nauset Public Schools, Orleans, MA
2007 – 2010	Finance & Administration/Chief Financial Officer Truro Vineyards of Cape Cod, Truro, MA
2001-2007	Department Chair, Foreign Language & Fine Arts Test Coordinator, Advanced Placement Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta, GA
1999-2001	Department Chair, Foreign Language & Fine Arts Henry County Schools, Stockbridge, GA
1998-1999	Teacher, Spanish St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Lenexa, KS
1996-1998	Teacher, English & Social Studies American School of Asunción, Asunción, Paraguay
1995-1996	Teacher, Spanish, English, ESOL Alief Alternative School, Alief, TX

PRESENTATIONS:

Roberts, A. (2011, February). "Gentrification and School Choice: Where goes the neighborhood". Paper presented at 63rd annual conference of the Southeastern Philosophy of Education Society, Decatur, GA.

Roberts, A. & Gowen, S. (2004, April). "Re-Gentrification and School Choice: The fusion of middle class values in 'up-and-coming neighborhoods'". Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Roberts, A. (2002, October). "Differentiated Instruction". Paper presented at the 14th Annual SINO-American Education Symposium, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. October 3, 2002.

ABSTRACT

GENTRIFICATION AND SCHOOL CHOICE:
WHERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD?
by
Amy Childers Roberts

This dissertation explores parent-gentrifiers' lived experiences of the school-selection process, including the social networking and the influence of those social networks in their selection of schools. School choice and parent involvement are forms of social capital, and such social capital represents the results of social networking and parental agency. The unknown is how this scenario manifests itself in gentrifying parents' school-selection process in Atlanta's Kirkwood and Grant Park neighborhoods. Gentrifying children's absence in urban public schools is of interest as residential areas integrate, while schools (re)segregate. The research paradigm is interpretivist as it investigates the qualitatively different ways in which people experience or think about a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). Purposive snowball sampling is used to reach 30 eligible participants in two neighborhoods. The methodological approach is qualitative phenomenographic interviews. The research found five options considered by parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process that are consistent with the previous literature: public school, charter school, private school, homeschool and undecided/not yet. The forms of communication utilized in the social networking were face-to-face, phone, e-mail, social networking sites, and texting. Participants varied by work schedule, neighborhood communication infrastructure, and level of social network in their forms of communication. Parent-gentrifiers' approaches to school selection included: activating agency, social networking, operating in social spaces, their social agenda with regard to

diversity, and their educational agenda with regard to curriculum, instruction, and school characteristics. The results show that while parents espouse racial and socioeconomic diversity, their choices in the option-demand system in Grant Park resulted in racial segregation among the schools. In contrast, the lack of formal options in Kirkwood resulted in racial integration in the public elementary school. The actions interpreted and ideas constructed in the process of selecting schools as a parent-gentrifier are of practical value to district efforts to understand the urban middle-class school-selection process. In light of increasing school segregation and student attrition, continued urban revitalization efforts and the sustainability of those efforts for many major cities in the United States is highly dependent on their ability to regenerate and maintain quality schools that attract the middle-class.

GENTRIFICATION AND SCHOOL CHOICE: WHERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

by

Amy Childers Roberts

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Educational Policy Studies
in
the Department of Educational Policy Studies
in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2011

DEDICATION

To my husband, Dave, for his endless support and to my children, Zachary and Isabella, who were "writing their dissertations" long before they knew how to read - all of whom gave me balance and reason to finish this endeavor. To my mother, who taught me that all things in life are temporary and the perseverance to see it the end. To the memory of my father, whom without I would not possess such a goal. To my grandparents, James and Lorraine, for their outstanding belief that I could do anything and setting the bar like so.

I would like to thank the wonderful women of Grant Park and Kirkwood for sharing your stories, your experiences and your reflections. I could not have completed this endeavor without your embrace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation is the culmination of perseverance and a fantastic support system. I wish to thank those who encouraged and patiently guided me on this long journey.

I acknowledge and send a very special thank you to my spectacular committee chair, Dr. Richard Lakes, and incredible committee members, Dr. Sheryl Gowen, Dr. Patricia Carter, and Dr. Katherine Hankins, who believed in my topic and guided me toward completion.

Finally, I would like to thank the Dan E. Sweat Foundation for its financial support of my topic with the generous award of the 2011 Dan E. Sweat Fellowship sponsored by the Dan E. Sweat Distinguished Scholar Chair in Educational and Community Policy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Glossary

Agency–also referred to as parental agency, based on the definition of human agency– "the freedom of individuals to act independently in creating a wide array of reactions to such massive deregulation" (Wells, 1996, p. 25). Human agency is the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world or their surrounding environment, having the wherewithal in a system of social relations to shape the outcome. Parental agency is a more specific form of human agency where parental involvement in decision-making "can be a means through which civic association can be regenerated, leading to the renewal (or establishment) of active and participative modes of citizenship" (Vincent, 2001, p. 347; see also Vincent & Martin, 2000). An individual's sense of agency is heavily structured by social class where opportunities for activating or exercising agency "are sought and taken up mostly by the professional middle-classes, secure in a sense of entitlement" (Vincent, 2001, p. 348).

Boundary Work –efforts to create and maintain symbolic most often by privileged groups in an effort to distinguish between themselves and others to gain preference in the distribution of material and cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1989). When distinctions are more unclear such as those in gentrifying neighborhoods, boundary work is enhanced as categorizations of merit emerge among groups. Martin (2008) found examples of such boundary work that hinged on the theme of child safety.

Concerted Cultivation–Parents' education, life expectancy, economic resources and occupation yield concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2002, p. 771). It mirrors a representation of Bourdieu's habitus or scholastic investment energy (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003b)

Cultural capital–a system of inherited and acquired values influenced by social class and parents' education, significantly affecting the system of reproduction strategies via hidden transmission. Schools play a significant role in the reproduction of advantage via cultural capital (Lareau & Weininger, 2003a). It may appear in the form of educational credentials/certificates (Bourdieu, 1977; Fuller, Elmore & Orfield, 1996; Redfern, 2003). For example, the kinds of books that parents read to their children or the types of entertainment they expose them to such as film, theater, music, and museums provide students with different bases of knowledge upon which they draw when trying to construct meaning from school experience. Educators favor the cultural capital of those who dominate economic, social, and political resources as well as the students who possess this form of capital (Ball, 2003). For research purposes, I have adopted the abstract form of Lareau and Weininger's (2003a) interpretation of cultural capital including academic and technical skills and abilities rather than high status cultural knowledge, noting that "it allows culture to be used as a resource that provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next" (p. 587). Reay (1998) interprets cultural capital to be the skills and abilities to monitor, repair, and compensate for paucities in their children's schooling.

Cultural familiarity–"a sense that fellow parents share their values, beliefs and customs. This is the first cultural logic that appears to drive the impassive reaction of some parents to school choice experiments" (Fuller, Elmore & Orfield, 1996, p. 14).

Cultural logic–how families and parents make sense of and benefit from public schools as an institution. For example, when low-income families begin to place a priority on location and vote with their feet, they are demonstrating a differentiated cultural logic–they begin to seek like neighborhoods, schools, and teachers (Fuller, Elmore & Orfield, 1996, p. 13).

Cultural reproduction–place, class and identity are fundamental to the middle class parenting practices that lead to middle class reproduction and middle class formation (Robson & Butler, 2001).

Division of Self/ Duality of self–A fundamental moral and ethical conflict with regard to the personal standpoint and the impersonal standpoint where two dichotomous judgments emerge such that everyone's life is equally important, and everyone has his own life to lead (Nagel,1991).

Focal Awareness–the direct object of one's attention during an experience. Returning to the experience at a different time, context or space will not necessarily reproduce the focal awareness. Complete focal awareness, a sort of panaesthesia, would yield the same experience for all people, all the time and all meaning would be lost (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 101).

Habitus–"More simply put, habitus is how one's view of the world is influenced by the traditional distribution of power and status in society" (Fuller, Elmore & Orfield,

1996, p. 27). Habitus is based on social class, race, and religion as well as family and social experiences.

Human Capital–for parents, it is their educational achievement. It is transmitted to their children as academic achievement only through their social capital or parental involvement (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 211; See also Coleman, J., 1988).

Normal biographies–the well-established and expected route for a person of a particular culture, class, and social position. "The communication of expectations also embed the child in an imagined future, a sense of what they could and should aspire to, in the form of a normal biography" (Ball, 2003, p. 108). For example, a child of two middle class professionals would expect to go to college without question. The choice is embedded in their lifestyle (Ball, 2006).

Normal trajectories–the planning of the steps to a normal biography. Norms and expectations which are generated and reciprocated through social networks, school functions, and parent-child relationships at a local level. Trajectory in general refers to the predicted life path of any individual based on location, family, culture, class, economic status. "They become part of the taken for granted response to decisions, what people like us, in this place, do" (Ball, 2006, p. 204).

Outcome Space–also referred to as the categories of description. "The outcome space is constituted by the researcher to represent different ways of experiencing a phenomenon are thus seen as representing a structured set" (Akerlind, 2005a). Marton & Booth (1997) define outcome space as "the complex of categories of

description comprising distinct groupings of aspects of the phenomenon and the relationships between them" (p. 125).

Parent-citizen–Hankins (2005) states, "That is, the subject-citizen of charter schools becomes the parent-citizen, who is part of a community of people interested in the education of children. Parent-citizens represent the involvement of private interests in public education and as such, they participate in the neoliberal agenda," (p. 43).

Parent-gentrifier–Hankins (2007) introduces the term parent-gentrifier as "middle-class professionals who are also parents" (p. 114).

Place-making–I utilize the term place-making to define the activities and strategies (practices) in which citizens engage to transform their physical and social space into place, recognizing that Cresswell's (2004) and Massey's (1994) perspective that place is a process. I base the definition on a combination of place-shaping and place-framing at the individual and collective neighborhood level. Place-shaping, as defined by Lyons (2007), is integrated in the definition, following Collins and Gibney's (2010) lead, because parent-gentrifiers may not be creating place, but shaping place that already exists.

> The term place-shaping covers a wide range of activity indeed anything that affects the well-being of the local community. It will mean different things in different places and at different levels of local government, informed by local character and history, community needs and demands, and local politics and leadership (Lyons, 2007, p. 174).

Where place is formed out of the "particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus," (Massey, 1994, p. 154), it may be shaped by the activities of citizens involved.

In addition to Lyons' (2007) place-shaping, I include the definition of Martin's (2003) place-framing because her perspective includes how place informs activism. Martin (2003) argues that neighborhood organizations foster a neighborhood identity that obscures social differences among residents in order to legitimate their own agendas and empower community activism. The neighborhood identity is created by describing the physical condition of the neighborhood and the daily life experiences of its residents, locating the problems in the place, and supplying a vision of what organizations or groups believe the neighborhood should be like, and while acknowledging great variation in the substance of individual agendas, place-framing provides motivational discourse for organizations that seek to unite residents (p. 730).

Resegregation–the result of neighborhoods or schools that were once approximating an integrated ratio regressing toward more segregated indices.

Social capital–the combination of familial organization, cultural and political networking investments that a person may possess and use to increase cultural and economic capital (Ball, 2003; See also Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

Social distance–"the boundaries drawn around ethnic groups, by themselves and others, represent to some degree the desire to keep these lives separate from others in society" (Kaplan & Holloway, 1998, p. 5). Social distance creates and/or maintains some form of segregation, especially in the form of educational segregation.

Social reproduction–"members of a social class accommodatively or strategically operate to maintain or enhance their position in social class structure" (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1979, p. 198 as translated in Ball, 2006, 184; Ball, 2003, p. 154).

Social space–Cresswell's (2004) definition is "socially produced space" (p. 10). Bourdieu argued "social space is to the practical space of everyday life, with its distances, which are kept or signaled, and neighbours who may be more remotes than strangers…," (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 169). Most significant to this space is the perception of the space by its occupants "which depend on their positions within it and in which their will to transform it or conserve it is often expressed" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 169). Further, the "space is constructed in such a way that the closer the agents, groups or institutions which are situated within this space, the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 15).

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Across the United States, the dramatic expansion of gentrification in urban neighborhoods yields residential integration because more middle-class professionals stay in the city and move to neighborhoods in economic, social and cultural transition (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003a; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c). The increase in gentrification/residential integration is forecasted to continue through 2025, because the sub-population of middle-class professionals finds urban living more economical, less isolating and more culturally educational than suburban life (Leinberger, 2008). As their numbers increase, so does their status as families rather than the young, single urban professionals that have characterized 40 years of gentrification research (DeSena, 2009; Karsten, 2003). The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process through phenomenography as well as to describe the variation in the social networking, information exchange, and methods of communication that influence the place-making and attachment in the school-selection process of parent-gentrifiers–a research topic original in both substantive and methodological approach.

Assumptions

The first assumption in this research is that modern gentrifiers are likely to be parents involved in some stage of school selection (DeSena, 2009, 2006; Karsten, 2003). A second assumption of this research is that school selection occurs, regardless of the formal options available to families (Ball, 2003, 2006). Parents who do not accept an option within the range of formal choices make informal decisions to formulate the educational trajectory of their children. Examples of informal options include moving within the boundaries of a better school district, sending their children to live at a relative's home, using a relative's address for registration and commuting, or not choosing at all. Regardless of the outcome, parents make a choice. As a result, school choice markets have grown, yielding the school-selection process to be an increasingly common household decision in gentrifying neighborhoods.

My research design phenomenographically explores the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process. The premise for this research is based on the third assumption that stable communities yield stable schools (ABT Associates, Inc., 2003), and gentrifying neighborhoods are demographic pockets that can either support or negate the role of public education, but they retain the potential to impact urban school reform, neighborhood by neighborhood (Cucchiara, 2008; Cucchiara & Horvat 2009; Lipman, 2004, 2009; 2011). The fourth assumption of this research is that school selection is a form of consumption behavior, where parents consume education (DeSena, 2009; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002). The fifth assumption is that parental social networks evolve in complexity (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002); and, in doing so,

they parallel the gentrification level of a neighborhood yielding more social infrastructure in more gentrified neighborhoods.

Purpose of the Study

The previous literature places an emphasis on the profiling, categorizing and essentialization of gentrifiers (Beck, 2007). Rather, this study explores the diverse experiences of parent-gentrifiers in their quest for urban school options. I chose phenomenography as the methodological approach. Phenomenography is the study of one's experience and reflection based two types of data - surface and deep response (Bowden & Green, 2005; Marton, 1981; Marton & Booth, 1997). Participants' responses are analyzed to unveil the "what" and "how" of the school-selection process in gentrifying neighborhoods. To grasp the meaning of urban middle class school selection, I wanted to hear the voice and stories of the participants. I developed the research questions to explore parent-gentrifiers' perceptions of the lived experience of the school-selection process.

The Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences and reflections of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process?
    a. What options do parent-gentrifiers consider in the school-selection process? ("What" aspect of the school-selection process)
    b. How do parent-gentrifiers perform in the school-selection process? ("How" aspect of the school-selection process)

2. What are their lived experiences and reflections in the social space and social networks surrounding the school-selection process?
    a. What forms of communication do parent-gentrifiers utilize to exchange information regarding school options influence their school-selection process? ("What" aspect of the school-selection process)
    b. How do social spaces and social networks where parent-gentrifiers exchange information regarding school options influence their school-selection process?

    ("How" aspect of the school-selection process)
3. What are the qualitatively different ways parent-gentrifiers experience the school-selection process? (The correlation between "What" and "How").

Significance of the Study

While the literature abounds with research studies on gentrifiers' consumption patterns, very little is known about how gentrifiers make educational decisions, or who and what influences their school choice (DeSena, 2006, 2009; Karsten, 2003; Oberti, 2007). Wells, et al. (2009) describe the need for a deeper analysis as necessary to understand how school and district quality relate to their communities and perpetuate inequality. I approach this study with regard for the relationships within the community and social space that perpetuate inequality, exploring the qualitatively different ways parent-gentrifiers experience school-selection.

Little detail is available regarding urban "parents' information-seeking activities, sense making of the options available to them, or negotiation of institutional requirements

and processes when faced with a school choice system" (Neild, 2005, p. 273; André-Bechely, 2005a, 2005b). Much of the previous gentrification research that mentions education originated out of London — a city with formal school choice since 1988 (Bridge, 2006; Butler, 2003, 1997; Butler & Hamnett, 2007; Butler & Robson, 2003a, 2003b; Butler & van Zanten, 2007; Robson & Butler, 2001). These earlier studies indicate that choice is determined by financial resources and social capital leading gentrifiers to send their children out of their catchment/zoned attendance area to better schools or to private schools. Although the previous literature base analyzed where gentrifying children attended school in Europe, there is a dearth of research on the school-selection process among parent-gentrifiers in the United States (DeSena, 2006, 2009). Parent-gentrifiers represent a growing population in the United States, but their consumption patterns of education are not fully understood.

Gentrifying parents are not easily distinguished. Demographically, we can ascertain their boundaries of existence more through their homes and neighborhoods than through common individual markers. Identifying characteristics of gentrifying areas include increased neighborhood residential values; increased educational or professional levels of residents; and, often, a change in the composition of the ethnicity of the neighborhood via displacement, although Black gentrification is on the rise (Combs, 2010; Moore, 2005, 2009). The identification of parent-gentrifiers is more difficult because their children do not typically attend their zoned public schools (Ball, et. al, 1995; Butler, 2003; Butler & Robson, 2003a; DeSena, 2009;). Their social networks and school selection are not obvious in demographic or census data. Parent-gentrifiers and their school-selection process are under-examined in the previous literature.

Gentrifiers are an urban sub-population increasing in number and household size due to an increasing number of family gentrifiers (DeSena, 2009, 2006; Karsten, 2003; Leinberger, 2008). However, current public school populations in the United States do not reflect the increase in residential integration (Boger & Orfield, 2005; DeSena, 2009; Reardon & Yun, 2005; Wells, et al., 2009). For example, Atlanta experienced significant gentrification between 1996 and 2006. The enrollment in Atlanta Public Schools dropped by 9,000 students between 1995 and 2003 and the majority-minority population mix remained constant (Atlanta Public Schools, 2004; Reid, 2003), potentially reflecting both the smaller family size of gentrifiers as well as their choice to send their children to non-public schools.

A decreasing student population characterizes the gentrification process, typically, because the average family size reduces with the influx of marginalized gentrifiers without children, who are then followed by family gentrifiers. Likewise, gentrifying families often have lower average number of children per household, creating smaller enrollment cohorts for the school system (Betancur, 2002; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002). An analysis of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process and social networking, to that end, are absent from the literature. Alternative school options are numerous in Atlanta, but the lived experience of how parent-gentrifiers approach the school-selection process is unknown.

Neighborhood Space and Place-making

The neighborhood is a physical space created by boundaries. When a house transfers ownership, the new residents often paint the interior and exterior with a fresh coat of paint and make renovations, which can vary from minor to complete. The house now represents their place in the neighborhood. The difference between a space and a place is like the difference between a house and a home. A common strategy of new occupants in a space, be it a dorm room, neighborhood or school, is to modify the space to reflect your personality, converting your space into a place (Cresswell, 2004). Such efforts to create their niche eventually extend beyond the physical boundaries of their yard and neighborhood into creating social spaces. Schools are an example of social space modified to reflect the interests of the participants. An aspect of the school-selection process is how parent-gentrifiers identify and attach to the space that they will choose for educating their children.

Schools are an essential component in the relations that families with children establish with their neighborhoods and cities (Oberti, 2007). They are a space for social interaction that actually beckons parental involvement and vision to make the school 'better'. Such invitations create the opportunity for place-making and attachment (Cresswell, 2004). The school space is modified in ways to reflect the place that parents want their children to spend their school days, based on their either nostalgic experiences or cultural logic. Schools and their cultures are a result of place-making. Amy Stuart Wells, et al. (2009) find that little research has looked at the way place affects educational opportunity in terms of boundaries and racial and social segregation. Butler (1997) discusses place in terms of a given geographical area holding values and special

meanings as well as whether a given locality has on causal effect on social processes or individual action (p. 9). To that end, an investigation of the lived experience of school selection process may provide an opportunity to view parent place-making in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Gentrifying parents reside in transitional neighborhoods. Transitional means that a change is occurring in the neighborhood space. The change is reflected in schools as new residents attempt to modify the existing social and physical space of schools. An important theme of this paper is the way those spaces are modified through the lived experiences of parent-gentrifiers to create a sense of place. Accordingly, those with power will most influence the modification of place into space, so who is most influential will influence place-making, based on the social constructs of social hierarchies--exclusion and power (Cresswell, 2004). Such hierarchies and effects of power were found in Cucchiara and Horvat's (2009) research on middle-class parents who chose public urban schools because they had the power to influence the shape and outcome of their child's education. Tim Butler (1997) considered the influence of place on what you do and think.

In this research, I consider the place-making activities of parent-gentrifiers in their lived experience. Further, I assert that place-making behaviors precede the enrollment of parent-gentrifiers' children and play a significant role in their school-selection process, because they begin to "pause and rest and become involved" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 20). These behaviors can range from playgroup protocol to school enrollment, but the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' will be learning how to negotiate the new structures of their space and leave their personal impression where "The places we have to negotiate

are the result of the practices of those who were here before us but this place in the future will be different" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 36). As parent-gentrifiers create a place, they change the practice of place-making in their own space and influence the future practices.

Place-making is based on historical roots and authenticity, both of which are found in the urban neighborhoods of Grant Park and Kirkwood. The Craftsman bungalows and Victorian homes demonstrate a historical period that is distinctive, thus, returning to the concept of gentrification as a form of consumption (Bridge, 2006). Walker and Clark (2009) assert that newcomer parents have less allegiance to place. In contrast, I argue that the place-making and attachment that result from the social networking of parent-gentrifiers creates allegiance. In their effort to shape their space, parent-gentrifiers create an alliance of agency.

In summary, parent-gentrifiers' households are significant to the long-term development and stability of middle-class settlements in urban areas because education is significant to the choice of residence, and vice versa (Cucchiara, 2008; Frankenberg, 2005; Robson & Butler, 2001). The lack of research on gentrifiers' school-selection process represents "a missed opportunity to develop a detailed picture of the practices and strategies through which distinctive middle class groups" form and sustain in different parts of the city (Robson & Butler, 2001, p. 70). Previous researchers explicitly voiced the need to research the school selection aspect of gentrification (André-Bechely, 2005a, 2005b; Croft, 2003; DeSena, 2006, 2009; Karsten, 2003; Robson & Butler, 2001). This study informs the literature base regarding parent gentrifiers' school-selection process, including their social spaces and social networks as places of access to school-related information.

Social Networks and Social Space

The fourth assumption of this research is that school selection is a form of consumption behavior, as informed by Warde and Tampubolon's (2001) study, which suggests that there is a relationship between whom a person knows and how and what they consume. In other words, social networks may influence taste and consumption practices, and consumption involving "situated activities entailed in social practices," yielding the school-selection process to be an important venue for which to examine the lived experiences of parent-gentrifiers (Warde & Tampubolon, 2001, p. 4). School selection is a process of accessing information, evaluation of information and eventually, enrolling a child in a chosen school. Social networks are spaces of information exchange for members. The social networks of gentrifiers may or may not resemble their social spaces or physical communities. My research investigates this gap in the literature.

Gentrifiers share a local place, but do not necessarily share social space in their neighborhoods (DeSena, 2006, 2009). Leinberger (2008) cites suburban sprawl as a previous contributing factor in the erosion of community life. Whereas suburban communities became isolated and culturally void due to the lack of walkable areas or town equivalents of Main Street, urban areas or town centers provide physical, geographical space for the cultivation of social relations and networks. Gentrifiers in the 21st century buy into the idea of an urban community replete with the aesthetically appealing old housing and open front porches (Bridge, 2006). The neighborhood school is also a component in a place-based community. While they renovate their homes, they also build and shape a community through their place-making activities. Community is

an essential component of their social life, and it derives from their social networking. The close geographical space of parent-gentrifiers makes neighborly contact, socialization and community formation less complicated than in the suburbs. The formally imposed and self-imposed boundaries of gentrifying neighborhoods influence the community and socialization. The role of boundaries on that space is also significant in terms of government and school district zones (Wells, et al., 2009).

Formal Boundaries and Neoliberalism in Communities

In the 1960s and 1970s, the social policies of big government began to shift and Community Development initiatives were created. For Atlanta, the development of community-based input and governance occurred in 1974 with the charter of the Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs) (Sawicki, 2002). By establishing the communities such as the NPUS, social space was deconstructed into more accountable units with local accountability and identification factors (Rose, 1996). Community life was largely determined by these new boundaries. With the development of community programs, agendas that had always been the federal or state government's social responsibility were redirected to community responsibility. Community members became differentiated via the degree of their affiliation (or marginalization) from tacit citizen conduct codes regarding daily practices like raising children, schools, consumption practices and the rationalization of their practices as self and familial investments (Rose, 1996). The caveat to this system was that ones' community network allegiances could be disregarded for a better connection or identification marker such as education (Rose, 1996). Individualism could steer allegiance, so even though one belonged to a community, they

could opt out as needed for a better choice such as schools. Although community is promoted, it is based on individuals and their consumption. In allowing this exemption, neoliberal choice markets create an ultimate division of the self versus the social good– Nagel's duality (Nagel, 1991). When formal boundaries are considered with regard to schools, individualism steers allegiance, regardless of the abstract "right thing to do" (Wells, et al., 2009, p. 21). Nagel's duality of self may appear as a theme in my research, depending on the priorities parents express in their school-selection process.

Walker (2010) examines the community in terms of the geographic and social commonalities or interests of residents, labeling school as a 'community of shared interests' located within 'a community of place' (2010, p. 716). The collective logics of community combine with the individual ethos of neoliberal politics through "choice, personal responsibility, control over one's own fate, self-promotion and self-government", and we can be governed through our allegiance to communities of morality and identity (Rose, 1996, pp. 335-336). However, we can break our allegiance to community in the order of self-interest. Nagel (1991) argues that the demarcation between individual interest and social good is precarious, especially with regard to diversity and segregation. Atkinson (2008) questions whether "we accept that such segregation is either desirable or inevitable" (p. 2630) in the social mix and balance of communities. Ball and Vincent (2007) demonstrate that different communities do create differing responses to the duality of self and society. In the current economy, one's own self-interest may supersede community benefit. Parent-gentrifiers may not attend the neighborhood school although doing so may preserve the community. Individualism and

self-interest may reign over social collectivism and the social good in the data results. Segregation may be a consequence.

Community life encompasses social networking and social spaces, virtual or geographic. The evolution of community in gentrifying neighborhoods entails social networking and social space with a sense of Nagel's individual self versus the social good. Based on Rose's (1996) thoughts on community, my study includes the social networking experience and the social space where the exchange of school selection information occurs for parent-gentrifiers. I begin with community as the base social network, with respect for the potential to transpose allegiances outside of the community or diverge from the community's orientation in order to serve individual interests.

Social Networks and Influence

A definition of geographical community provides the physical boundaries for this research approach, but the social networks and social spaces in which they form may provide differentiated boundaries based on place-making behaviors. Foremost, social networks help form value systems through which one calibrates principles and judges actions. Vincent (2003) argues that specific definitions of the good parent or good school originate within the communities to which one belongs.

> That is, value systems are constructed, or influenced, or inflected within families, social networks and local communities. They become part of the taken for granted responses to decisions, what people like us, in this place, do. This is where collectivity comes back in, and is a basis for the values of individualism, the putting of the family first. These social contexts constitute a moral community within which the necessity of an attitude, toward family, schooling and parenting, is formed and maintained (Vincent, 2003, p. 204 in Ball, 2006).

Taken a step further, the social networks of parent-gentrifiers are important because Warde and Tampubolon (2001) found social networks could influence consumption behaviors. Research regarding the influence of Social Network Sites (SNS) on consumption practices is referred to as the composition of the taste fabric (Liu, 2008; Liu, Davenport, & Maes, 2006; Liu, Maes, & Davenport, 2006). Where the social networking occurs may make it possible to include or exclude others using virtual social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or MySpace, making the use of SNS an innovative method of looking at consumption patterns (Liu, 2008; Liu, Maes, & Davenport, 2006; Liu, Davenport, & Maes, 2006). The boundary work of parent-gentrifiers is also of interest to the formation of a community on a SNS (Martin, 2008). Social networking sites provide additional opportunities for place-making discourse and attachment with the power to include and exclude others.

Virtual Social Space

Virtual communities are an unexamined area of parent-gentrifiers' social networking. Previous research does not include the forms of social networking utilized among parent-gentrifiers. Driskell and Lyon (2002) break community into three spheres: local place (i.e. neighborhoods), shared space (i.e. school or church), and cyberspace. They find that virtual communities offer two of the three prerequisites to be a community—common ties and social interaction, but not the identification with place (Driskell & Lyon, 2002). I include the extent that place-making occurs via the common ties and social interactions in virtual social space. The community life of days gone by did not allow one to literally and decisively pick and choose or accept and ignore

community members in one's social network with the touch of button. Yet, that is exactly what happens with Facebook and MySpace with one's "friends".

The selection of social networks can be strategic. Savage (2008) refers to selective networking and socio-spatial attachments as "elective belonging" (p. 1). Social networking with regard to school selection is best understood by analyzing the middle-class parents' "patterns and processes of time and space management and the existence of social enclaves and social networks" (Ball, 2006, p. 164; Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1995). Utilizing social networks in cyberspace as a means of coordinating information is a method of time and space management amongst social ties. For instance, Facebook is one of the largest social networking sites with 400 million users in its sixth year of business (Helft & Stone, 2010). Social networking sites provide a new research opportunity in the social space of parent-gentrifiers'. Whether on-site or on-line, elective belonging in this instance occurs in purposeful social networks that yield strategic social capital and access to information that benefits the education of one's children as well as an opportunity to form attachments to place.

The Topic of Children

The access and exchange of information that occur in parent-gentrifiers' social networking may influence the school-selection process in various ways. Leslie Martin (2008) studied three gentrifying neighborhoods in Atlanta and found that children and their safety are an innocent, 'blameless topic of discussion' that serves to create "boundary work" that symbolically excludes others based on the perception of who or

what constitutes unsafe environments or practices (p. 332). Boundary work serves to create a polarization between groups where a value or merit places one group in a more privileged position than another. In Martin's (2008) study, parents are able to discuss issues in subtle, consistent ways, without reference to race or class, that help them establish the boundaries of a social network of active citizens in the neighborhood where the focus of conversation revolves around the paramount issue of child safety. Such contexts provide the venue through which can one can effectively include and exclude members in their social networks based on their positions of what is in the best interest of children. Kesha Moore's (2005) work on gentrification reinforces the notion that concern for child safety increases tensions in gentrifying neighborhoods. The conversations, and where they occur, are a component of place-making for parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process.

Gentrifying parents are particularly adept at claiming their space and rights when coupled with the compelling issue of children (Martin, 2008), gaining legitimacy via caretaking roles and viability through their culturally and economically privileged social networks. While schools are an "essential component of the relations most families with children establish with their neighborhoods and cities" (Oberti, 2007, p. 226), and a perceived and actual power differential can intentionally and unintentionally produce social inequalities. Compared to previous gentrifying populations which did not generally include children (DeSena, 2006, 2009; Karsten, 2003), the new parent-gentrifiers may wield greater influence and community school transformation through the common, shared interests of their children. The combination of close geographical space,

shared parental concerns and socio-economic commonalities lubricates the social networks formed around their children's activities.

With regard to school selection, parent-gentrifiers socially network for access to information, but where that information exchange occurs is unknown. This research is practical to the extent that it potentially informs theory regarding the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process, as well as their information exchange and the social network influence on their school choice. The extension of parent-gentrifiers' social space into virtual space is an unexplored avenue of social networking where a cyberspace community of parent-gentrifiers may parallel the complex evolution of the actual community interactions.

Another significant effect of gentrification on schools is a magnification of the issues of segregation (DeSena, 2009). In the past, school choice previously contributed to socially and racially segregated schools (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002). An exploration of the lived experiences of parent-gentrifiers may reveal insight to the school-selection process and the role of social networking from multiple perspectives. Due to rapid population growth in the last 20 years as a Sunbelt city, Atlanta, Georgia, was an attractive research site.

Atlanta

The South produced large waves of immigration from 1995 to 2000, and Atlanta was a specific population magnet between 1995-2000, with a high net immigration of 68.4% - the second largest in the country (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Atlanta experienced growth via gentrification (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). A

majority of Atlanta immigrants in 1995-2000 were between the 25-39 years of age, carrying a potentially heavy influence on society through childbearing capacity and human capital longevity due to their young age (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c). Their settlement in central cities stimulated economic development and the provision of services because their housing choices are seen as not only a place to live, but also an investment in the area. Georgia was a "domestic powerhouse" of inmigration from 1995-2000, and a popular destination for the young, single and college-educated, with Atlanta seeing a great deal of net inmigration of the young, single and college-educated (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c, p. 5). In essence, Atlanta has a substantial population of potential parents, and they are residentially integrating. They have the potential to be parent-gentrifiers who will select schools in the near future.

Atlanta has experienced much neighborhood transition (Atlanta City Council, 2001; Martin, 2007, 2008). In choosing neighborhoods in which to concentrate this research, I looked for areas that qualified as being in various stages of the process of gentrification in order to maximize variation and make comparisons where the more gentrified an area was, the more school options were potentially available to residents (DeSena 2009). This research focuses on two gentrifying neighborhoods with varying degrees of gentrification. The fifth assumption in this research is that the evolution of social networks parallels the progressive stages of neighborhood gentrification as neighborhood infrastructure increases. As more people gentrify a neighborhood, more connections are made that are analogous to the development of infrastructure and investment (See also Warde, 1991 regarding evolution of gentrified neighborhoods).

A Tale of Two Neighborhoods

Kirkwood and Grant Park are the chosen research sites based on their distinct levels of gentrification, racial composition, and variation in formal school options. Comparing and contrasting their statistics offers a glimpse of the demographic variance. Kirkwood is a relatively newer gentrifying neighborhood when compared with Grant Park, a historic neighborhood that experienced gentrification at least ten years prior to Kirkwood. Grant Park is a neighborhood characterized by high home values with the average of $335,000 (CityData, 2007b). The Grant Park population is majority White, and the occupations are predominantly professional (CityData, 2007b). While the average age is 33-34, children constitute approximately 18% of the population (CityData, 2007b). Private school attendance for 3-18 year olds is almost 14% (CityData, 2007b)- a very high number considering the existence of the Neighborhood Charter School which resulted from the effort of local parents. "The Neighborhood Charter School was the brainchild of parents and residents of the Grant Park neighborhood who worked for years to raise money and gain school-district approval for their school," (Hankins, 2007, p. 113). In 2011, the Neighborhood Charter School merged with the Atlanta Charter Middle School, creating a K-8 charter school. Last, a view of the attendance zone for the neighborhood public school, Parkside Elementary School, demonstrates how the boundary cuts through Grant Park, potentially dividing the community and its social spaces.

In contrast, Kirkwood home values average $192,000 (CityData, 2007a). The populace has a much higher proportion of service, sales and office occupations. Kirkwood is a majority Black neighborhood with 18% fewer mortgages than Grant Park.

Fewer mortgages would indicate an older population or cheaper housing stock with cash transactions. The higher concentration of people in Kirkwood per square mile than Atlanta may indicate the availability of more rental units. Finally, Kirkwood has a large population of children–almost twice as many as Grant Park, but only 0.9% attends a private school between the ages of 3-18 (CityData, 2007a). The result is two physically close, but socially different neighborhoods experiencing gentrification. Further, the histories of both elementary schools resonate differently within the community, yielding different expectations from residents.

Delimitations

I designed the boundaries of the study to narrow the study's scope and focus. I conducted the research from January 2010 to August 2011, in Atlanta, Georgia. Participants in the study were selected based on the criteria that they were residents of the gentrifying neighborhoods Kirkwood or Grant Park with a child between the age of 0 and 5 in order to hear the lived experience of school selection in the primary years. Because variation is the key to a successful phenomenography, the two neighborhoods chosen for study were well-suited to demonstrate differences in the stages of gentrification. I did not consider other potential neighborhoods outside of the attendance zone for Atlanta Public Schools. Numerous other neighborhoods were eliminated for being either too extreme in racial composition (in any direction), demonstrating a shift in home values, or not showing children as a portion of their population graph such that data would produce results based on maximized variation sampling.

Summary

The school-selection process is an experience, not an outcome. My dissertation is original because there is a paucity of research regarding gentrifiers' school choice in the United States. In addition, previous research has not studied school selection as a process that incorporates social networking and virtual communities. Finally, phenomenography is a relatively new approach to studying the lived experience of a phenomenon. Cumulatively, this research proposal offers original empirical research to contribute to the nexus of the fields of education and gentrification, thus yielding substantive and methodological originality.

I briefly recapitulate the assumptions that form the foundation of this research. The first assumption in this research is that modern gentrifiers are likely to be parents involved in some stage of school selection. A second assumption of this research is that school selection occurs, regardless of the formal options available to families. The third assumption is that stable communities yield stable schools, and that gentrifying neighborhoods can support or negate public education, retaining the potential to influence substantial urban school reform, neighborhood by neighborhood. The fourth assumption of this research is that school selection is a form of consumption behavior, where parents consume education through the process of school choice. The fifth assumption is that parental social networks evolve in complexity in parallel to the gentrification level of a neighborhood.

The study is organized into five chapters, along with a bibliography/reference section, and appendix. Chapter 1 presents the problem and its significance as a lack of research in the nexus of gentrification and education in a neoliberal market. Chapter 2

presents a review of the previous related literature dealing with gentrification, education, social networks, social space, place-making, and parental involvement in the school-selection process. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology of the study. I present the data analysis and a discussion of the results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study concludes with a bibliography and appendix.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to explore the context and multiple spheres of influence on parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process, I review several bodies of literature, including the studies of neoliberalism, gentrification, middle-class school choice, social networks, and segregation. I begin with an analysis of the influence of neoliberal ideology on the markets of education and gentrification as a theoretical framework to explore gentrification in terms of the consumption of housing, and where parent-gentrifiers' agency and participation manifests itself in school selection in the consumption of education. The gentrification literature section depicts the history and globalization of gentrification, which I combine with the previous research on education, middle-class school choice, social networks and segregation to construct an exploration of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process.

The Role of Neoliberalism in Gentrification and Education

Neoliberalism represents a shift from public to private with a focus on economic competition—a market-based agenda or free market. The neoliberal market model focuses on individualism, emphasizing free trade, and natural, fair competition in meritocratic schools and job markets (Brantlinger, 2003). Neoliberal politics take capitalist choice to a global level where everyone's interest is based on maximizing their

individual potential. Community and social cohesion transform into a secondary priority. The foundations of a neoliberal market economy are property rights, businesses, and inheritance rights, based on the U.S. belief that democracy is essential. Harvey (2005) elaborates on the foundation as political economics focused on the liberation of individual entrepreneurialism with a focus on private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Originating in the 1960s, neoliberal policy expanded choice in the areas of education and housing in the United States and the United Kingdom. By the 1980s, the respective Reagan and Thatcher administrations were heavily tied to the neoliberal agenda (Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Thirty years later, the United States and the United Kingdom are important research sites for gentrification and school choice. The United Kingdom, and especially London, has a deep literature base regarding gentrification and their formal system of school choice.

From 1937 until the 1960s, the United States government operated a social welfare state with Keynesian policies that dominated U.S. economic policy (Harvey, 2005; Keynes, 1936/1964), redistributing income to the poor and public spaces. As neoliberal policy superseded the Keynesian economics of post-World War II, a focus developed on the individual accumulation of capital rather than the social welfare and affirmative action policies of the past (Lakes & Carter, 2009). Neoliberalism surfaced around the time of the Nixon administration, when the federal government reduced public urban finances in a laissez-faire approach (Hackworth, 2007). The reductions of federal capital left windows of opportunity for the investment of private capital. Because one must invest to reap a return in the accumulation of capital, initial investments require some capital resources—eliminating those without capital in the beginning. Harvey

suggests that neoliberalism is an agenda "to restore power to the economic elite" via capital accumulation (2005, p. 19). Capital accumulation is a point of consideration throughout the remainder of my research, and although economic capital is the current form under discussion, I review various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in detail in this chapter.

Neoclassical urban theory predicted the future suburban sprawl out of urban areas in the 1950s (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Investment and economic capital accumulation would theoretically follow the suburbs because the middle class would consume the newest housing in low-density areas (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). However, the flow of capital began to change in the 1980s when urban areas increasingly attracted investment as dual-income families desired shorter commutes to their places of business, especially in cities with high traffic congestion and low investment in public transportation. The middle-class preference for cheap land and space in suburbia waned and gentrification occurred in many urban areas.

Commencing in the 1960s, Atlanta used urban-renewal programs to remove poor Black neighborhoods from the areas surrounding downtown and the convention center (Keating, 2001). At the same time, cities utilized neoliberal policies to create incentives for capital development in abandoned areas, spurring gentrification and resulting in increased owner-occupation and a vested interest in urban property (Hackworth, 2007). As Maynard Jackson's 1990-1994 administration focused on the revitalization of poor African American neighborhoods, the business community had another agenda based on corporate-financed, volunteer-based programs, an approach that won out over that of the city (Keating, 2001, p. 145). Specific components of Atlanta's urban-renewal policies in

the late 1990s were Empowerment Zones (Central Atlanta Progress and the City of Atlanta, 2000; Morse, 1997). The city designated blighted areas as Empowerment Zones. If one purchased a home in an Empowerment Zone, the Atlanta Housing Authority offered buyers a low down payment and a below-market interest rate with the single requirement to reside in the home a minimum of two years. Down payments were as little as $52.00 on a $95,000 loan with a reduced interest rate [4.75%] and closing costs paid by the Atlanta Housing Authority (author's personal anecdote). In addition, Empowerment Zones had additional police staffed to ameliorate safety concerns. Summerhill was an example of "intentional gentrification", where low-income renters could not afford the market rate of the new construction units, and so they were displaced by high-income homeowners (Keating, p. 159). The offer enticed many first-time homebuyers. Because houses were cheap in transitional neighborhoods because they posed an investment risk making gentrification a form of speculation in the free market but cushioned by lower prices in the early phases of transition.

Residential housing reached exacerbated prices during the boom from the late 1990s to 2006, underlined by the American Dream of expanding capital worth through one's home. Thus, gentrification allowed perceptive buyers to purchase their first home at a time when soaring real estate prices would have otherwise priced them out of the market. The previous section provides support of the neoliberal agenda in action in Atlanta. The next section demonstrates the nexus of neoliberalism, gentrification, and education.

Gentrification is "the leading edge of neoliberal urbanism"–a discourse of regeneration and renaissance notes Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008, p. xvii) which yields

geographical unevenness and heterogeneous (mixed) communities (Butler & Lees, 2006; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Smith, 2008). Gentrification, an example of the neoliberal market model, is facilitated by the state which yields economic capital accumulation via property taxes and valuation to the individual (Hackworth, 2007; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Lipman (2009, 2011) finds that neoliberal discourse frames minority urban areas as pathological spaces in need of reform and rejuvenation.

> The discourse of 'failing' schools in low-income communities of color is constitutive of framing 'bad neighborhoods' in need of cleansing. Closing schools to re-open them with new identities in turn enables the 'renaissance' of the area for new middle-class home buyers (Lipman, 2011, p. 226).

Such rhetoric justifies middle class 'progress and change' in gentrifying neighborhoods as residents are displaced and areas transformed to capitalize on consumption patterns.

The commercial transformation of urban areas is another example of how neoliberal policy attracts and enriches private capital. Third wave gentrification is the post-recession generalized strategy of capital accumulation that evolved out of second wave gentrification during the mid-1990s (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Hackworth (2002) extends that argument to include the combination of corporate investment and the facilitation of that investment by federal and state governments. The eradication of public housing, a significant indicator of third wave gentrification, invites corporate investment in mixed income communities (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). As a component of the corporate-center development strategy, urban revitalization is the growth machine for the development of the post-industrial city on a global scale (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Lipman, 2004, 2009, 2011). "By getting rid of the old through renovation,

eradicating public housing in certain areas or at least displacing others, and eliminating equality, gentrification epitomizes neoliberalism" (Hackworth, 2007). The new communities, city centers and urban villages provide every amenity in a neoliberal market, indulging one's freedom to consume and another's freedom to capitalize on the supply side of the former's demands.

Founded on the belief that each individual is accountable for her own fate based her actions and well-being, neoliberalism supports individual liberty with special regard to lifestyles and consumption (Harvey, 2005). Freedom to consume is based on the assumption that "individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market" (Harvey, 2005, p. 7). Restated by Pauline Lipman (2011), "Neoliberalism reframes democracy as the freedom to consume in the market…" (p. 223). Patterns of consumption follow trends based on individualism, coveting that which is unique. Personalization or customization (choice) and exotic consumption are hallmark features of the neoliberal economy and gentrification. If you can imagine it, you can buy it.

In the U.S., neoliberal policy functions as the "new capitalism which universalizes White middle-class culture through "customizing desire" as opposed to old capitalism's form of "standardizing desire" (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996, p. 43). Consumption behaviors and desires, in turn, transform the trends of supply and demand. Gentrification is an example of the neoliberal market model in action, based on expectations and consumption/taste trends, both of which can cause the supply and demand curve to shift (Ball, 2006; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Prices soar in areas that experience gentrification when they experience an increase in the demand side of the market.

Although neoliberalism changes the daily life of American markets through the promotion of community regeneration and urban order, it is based on the promotion of individual interests and desires (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Under a neoliberal agenda, social service programs transition to market-based models (Lipman, 2011), and they foster local grassroots movements and private capital investments. Programs that do not support the institutional framework of neoliberal markets, such as education, parks, libraries and community centers, and social housing are left to survive without government intervention where they, instead, fall into the hands of individuals who actively involve and intervene (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011). Under neoliberal ideology, the notion of social responsibility and civic space where people of all socioeconomic statuses share responsibilities as a community is gone (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996), leaving vacancies for those with the means and agency to become key players in housing and education. At the individual level, the priorities of social justice and community cohesion dissolve (Brantlinger, 2003; DeSena, 2006; Lipman, 2004). The result is a tension between "neoliberal capital accumulation, the global city agenda, and social justice in education" (Lipman, 2004, p. 24). As a result, those with more capital to invest also have more influence on the outcomes of social services, including the delivery of education and community space.

Within the field of education, neoliberalism poses a threat to the traditional institution of public schools because they are pathologized as bastions of mediocrity in need of reform. Education, a social service program, is at risk of losing its equitable priorities and community-centered space due to competition for resources and privatization. The assumption of meritocratic [if it is a good school, it will succeed]

schools is inherent in neoliberal market models of education, turning the public domain of education into a competitive market for a quality education (Vincent & Martin, 2002).

Schools have operated under the paradigm of equality since 1954 (Brown I and IDEA 1994). As school choice was initially a solution to desegregation plans, it was recast in the 1980s as "...a focus on improving the quality of schools rather than working to make schools racially integrated" (Henig, 1996). With the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by a free market, neoliberal ideology replaces a focus on equity with that of business models of efficient production, choice, accountability and excellence (Harvey, 2005). In the free market ideology, increased competition for excellence, accountability and choice sacrifice equity. Equity is not necessarily measurable, efficient or profitable. It is a value-added process. Unfortunately, "the values of individual freedoms and social justice are not, however, necessarily compatible" (Harvey, 2005, p.41; See also Nagel, 1991).

As a result of capitalist globalization and its inherent economic restructuring, neoliberal markets exacerbate inequality in education (Maloutas, 2007). In summary, neoliberal education markets conflict with the social justice agenda because private interests do not necessarily serve the social good. In the next section, I discuss how neoliberal ideology affects education with respect to school choice.

School choice is a neoliberal market model (Ball, 2006; Godwin & Kemerer, 2002; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000), resulting in a shift from public to private and charter education where space, and the politics governing that space, are restructured to exclude those with less expertise through deregulation and competition. Utilizing neoliberal discourse based on progress and change via the labels of renaissance,

regeneration, state-of-the-art and reform as well as "obsolescence, pathology and rejuvenation" (Lipman, 2011, p. 224), neoliberal proponents create a wall of authority that can only be refuted by those resistant to progress and change.

In a gentrifying neighborhood, schools plagued by low test scores and declining enrollment are labeled obsolete and pathological, calling for rejuvenation. Rejuvenation is beckoned in the form of restructuring the schools into charters, increasing parental involvement and increasing the financial base of the school population via property taxes and household contributions such as social and cultural capital. Elmore (1991) calls this system of education "option-demand" where new school alternatives operate in parallel to the traditional public schools. Parents option out of their zoned neighborhood school and choose an alternative based on their demands (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). As a result, schools compete for students and the funding that follows them while parents face the responsibility of the school-selection process.

School choice marketing places choice, excellence and accountability at the forefront of education. Opening up the market of public education via school choice has reigned as the answer to low educational achievement in the United States since 1990 (Friedman, 1962/2002; Moe, 2001), yielding decentralized administrations, corporate partnerships and strong accountability measures in public schools (Lipman, 2004, 2008). These factors open the schools to private interests where they were once neutral in the public domain (Harvey, 2005; Vincent & Martin, 2002). Public school choice creates a space for practicing privilege. Reay, Crozier, and James (2011) describe the effect of neoliberalism on public education.

> Hence, we would argue that the neoliberal approach to education provides opportunities for these 'mutating' and evolving middle-class families, already predisposed to social and ethical flexibility, to adapt to the system and construct new forms of advantage as their existing capital interacts with the resources of 'ordinary' urban schools (p. 80).

In the case of gentrifying neighborhoods, social contracts such as good schools remain unfulfilled, and parents must activate their access to resources and agency as parent-citizens to fulfill these social contracts. In this section, I discussed the role of neoliberal markets on education and how the roll-back of social contracts has created pockets of need, inviting parent-citizen intervention. In the next section, I will discuss how parents step into a similar role in education as "citizen-consumers" (Schneider & Buckley, 2002, p.133).

Parental involvement in education can take various forms. School choice is one form of parental involvement and an exhibition of the exercise of social capital. Formal or informal school choice is "a marker of economic privilege…guaranteed to those who can afford to choose" (Reay & Lucey, 2003, p. 138). Formalized school choice operates within a structured framework of options, yet those who are not involved in formal school choice options still strategize to maximize their children's competitive position and gain access to good schools/elite universities (Ball, 2003, p. 20; Reay, 1998a, 1998b). Informal school choice is a vaguely understood aspect of the market model of education because it operates outside of the formally structured framework, integrating options that may fall under the radar of school attendance administrators. Informal choice is a strategic reaction to the lack of formal choice.

Informed parents make choices with regard to their situational constraints, whereas uninformed parents default, choosing not to choose and going to a zoned public

school. Parents most likely to participate in school choice have two tendencies: they view education as a consumer good as opposed to an expert-driven government service; and they believe they have the skills and resources to make a sound educational choice for their child (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002). The choices they make are significant to community stability (ABT Associates, Inc., 2003). Parents who have more education, time, and money are capable of more informed decisions (Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2000). Therefore, choice manifests itself in different outcomes, and when choice is available, a false meritocratic sense of justice prevails in education. "Choice operates in the inner city by differentiating schools and concentrating problems," (Reay & Lucey, 2003, p. 139). Choice renders the illusion of equity because everyone has an opportunity to choose; but choice originates from capital, whether it is economic, social or cultural.

Parent-gentrifiers are an increasing demographic in urban areas. In urban areas, the outcomes of school choice can divide and segregate. As middle-class parents, they seek school information using access and agency, a result of their social and cultural capital, and their choices may contribute to segregation or resegregation (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). In summary, neoliberal policy is relevant to the topics of gentrification and school choice, providing a theoretical framework for the policies and activities that serve to promulgate neighborhood and school transitions. In this study, I consider the role of the perceptions of excellence, accountability and equity in the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process.

Gentrification

Gentrification has a long history dating back to the 1950s postwar changes that began in Boston, Washington, D.C., London and New York (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008), and was formally defined by Ruth Glass (1964). The previous literature describes gentrifiers as young, college-educated, and childless. Gentrification by families is a recent phenomenon. Urban living integrates career, family and culture (Butler, 1997; Karsten, 2003; Warde, 1991), yet it is not understood whether urban life can support and sustain the educational demands of the middle class. As of 2010, gentrification still "is understood as a term of class conflict that raises questions of equity and fairness" (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008, p. 245), because gentrification yields residential displacement and exclusion of one socioeconomic group with another of higher socioeconomic status. Because socioeconomics and race are highly interrelated, the past precedent has been a displacement of the Black citizenry when Whites move into a neighborhood. In the following sections, I review the process of gentrification.

The residential purchasing power of middle- and upper-class families in the 1950s resulted in a segregation by race and class between suburban and urban America, better known as 'White flight' (Renzulli & Evans, 2005). The mass production of the automobile, construction of federal highways, and the *Brown I* (1954) decision stimulated the flow of Whites moved to the suburbs. Affordable cars and highway infrastructure made commutes possible. Mothers took care of domestic duties and the children in the suburbs, while fathers worked long hours in the city, lasting through the domestic revolution of dishwashers and washing machines (Sassen, 1991; See also Butler, 1997; Rose, 1984; Warde, 1991). Meanwhile, inner cities developed districts of ethnic groups.

The label affixed to this type of social segregation was de facto segregation, a function of racist and classist residential housing patterns.

While the initial attraction and return to urban areas may have been economic, it also included the convenience of infinite consumption. Gentrification is linked to gender and consumption behaviors because city life became more alluring when women entered the workforce. The 1960s brought the women's rights movement, and middle-class families felt the first benefits of dual incomes, which led to more consumption activity. The city offered more employment, childcare and cultural opportunities than suburban life (Butler, 1997; Rose, 1984, Warde, 1991). A reverse White influx occurred as these urban areas became popular for working women, marginalized groups, and those wanting to reduce their daily commute (Ball, 2003; Butler, 1997; Glass, 1964; Sassen, 1991; Warde, 1991). Likewise, cities provide more cultural opportunities, activities and destinations to consume as a commodity than suburban areas.

Butler (1997) suggests that living in the city further supported the consumption of cultural capital sought by college-educated women to such an extent that they do not return to their small hometowns after graduation. The arrival of middle-class households converts physical space by consumption demands. In addition, gentrifiers' consumption patterns construct social space (Ball, 2006; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Redfern, 2003). While their consumption patterns border unique and exotic, gentrifiers' resulting social space, consumption behaviors and social networks of information regarding school selection are under-examined.

Gentrification constitutes a form of social movement that spatially integrates social groups— a phenomenon combining the areas of urban planning, human

geography, anthropology, economics, and sociology. Gentrification may be referred to as urban renaissance, urban revitalization, urban regeneration, or inner city redevelopment (Lees, 2000; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Ruth Glass (1964) originated the term 'gentrification' to describe the urban childless middle class moving into working class and Victorian neighborhoods, renovating homes, displacing residents, and changing the "social character" of the neighborhood (p. xix). Typically, this neighborhood change occurs within a few miles of the downtown business district (Clay, 1979, as cited in Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; London, Lee, & Lipton, 1986; Warde, 1991). It is characterized by the middle class moving into poor or working class residential areas, renovating the homes, and the eventual displacement of the original residents (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; London, Lee, & Lipton, 1986; Warde, 1991).

Through private market activity, the socioeconomic status of the new residents and the physical appearance of the area experience dramatic change (Warde, 1991; London, Lee, & Lipton, 1986). This is an example of pioneer or first-wave gentrification (Lees, 2000; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Smith, 1996). Second-wave gentrification is encompassed by a wider movement of economic development coupled with a more affluent group of professionals than the first wave of gentrification (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Third-wave gentrification is expressly promoted by local governments and backed by corporate financial investments (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Second-wave gentrification best describes my two research sites (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Although several models exist to describe the phases of transition (Clay, 1979 as cited in Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Rose, 1984; Warde, 1991), I find that Warde's model (1991)

resonates with the points of first and second wave gentrification in both neighborhoods studied. Neither neighborhood renders overt corporate investment, although they do reflect the neoliberal policies that facilitate gentrification.

Gentrification is a long-term process of urban revitalization and renewal. As it occurs, there is a continuum of progress. The key indicators of a gentrifying neighborhood include the following four criteria: a displacement of one group of residents with another group of higher social status; a transformation of the built environment and the development of local services to accommodate consumption lifestyles (i.e., restaurants, charter schools, services for consumption); a gathering of a group with similar lifestyles or cultures and consumer preferences (i.e., marginalized populations); and an economic reordering of the residential and commercial property values and an increase in private property ownership, (i.e. owner-occupation increases and higher rent or sales prices are evident) (Warde, 1991). These functions may not occur simultaneously, but gentrification is most evident when they do (Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs, 2002; Warde, 1991). All references to gentrification in my research are based on the above indicators. For the purpose of this research, once all four of the preceding indicators are in place, an area is considered gentrified—as opposed to gentrifying.

Gentrification has spurred much controversy as it has meant that middle-class professionals with a formal education and higher income form a pattern of settlement in a formerly undesirable neighborhood (Butler, 1997; DeSena, 2006; Glass, 1964; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Rose, 1984; Smith, 1979; Warde, 1991). Two theories underlie much of the research regarding the causes of gentrification.

Neil Smith (1979) introduced the rent-gap [also known as the production thesis (DeSena, 2009)] as an explanation for gentrification. Essentially, the rent-gap thesis follows the potential versus the actual rent that a property can produce. If there is a large gap between the actual and the potential rent in an area, investors will speculate and invest. The expenditure of a large-scale corporate investment, such as the proposed Atlanta Beltline project, plays a role in increasing the potential rent and spurring individuals such as landlords or homeowners to carry on the process of investment. One by one, homes are purchased and renovated with the intention of charging the potential rent to recuperate their investment or to valorize the property for resale. The gap caused by gentrification eventually forces original or local residents out of their homes as property taxes increase with the valorization of the neighborhood (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). The rent-gap thesis is the most widely accepted structural explanation for gentrification.

A second major theory for the cause of gentrification is that it is a consumption practice, based on the demand for urban housing with an aesthetic appeal (Bridge, 2006). Areas prone to gentrification begin as post-industrial built environments, either as lofts in warehouses or poor historic neighborhoods. These areas are referred to as neo-bohemian [or artistic/creative/counterculture] neighborhoods (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Lloyd, 2002; Redfern, 2003). The development of neo-bohemian areas occur with the recycling of industrial areas to white-collar finance and service centers that require educated workers willing to purchase that which is "cultural as a commodity" …"bohemian chic, characterized by a notion of diversity that often fetishes the gritty and the illicit as authentic" (Lloyd, 2002, p. 518). Gentrification often follows

a neo-bohemian movement of the creative class, artists and students, into residential spaces (Florida, 2003; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Lipman, 2004; Lloyd, 2002). Zukin's (1989) artistic mode of production (AMP) creates a heightened sense of art, history, space and time, yielding a cultural commodity for sale (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008, p. 118; Zukin, 1989, p. 176). The alternative housing creates a distinct impression in neoliberal markets poised to consume unique, personalized or exotic items.

Marginalized groups, specifically those with alternative lifestyles, are often at the forefront of gentrifying neighborhoods. According to Rose (1984), a marginal gentrifier operates on the fringe of social norms such as their marital status, sexual orientation, or their living arrangements. Marginal gentrifiers constitute an important element in the gentrification process because they usually give it momentum as initial risk-takers. They want to remain in the city, but cannot establish themselves in middle-class neighborhoods so they buy a house based on financial constraints and social objectives (Rose, 1984). They bring cultural capital to new areas that, subsequently, attract economic capital, and instigate pockets of revitalization in neighborhoods across the United States.

The exoticism of gentrification reflects a cosmopolitan consumption practice (Bridge, 2006). Gentrification carries a theme of unique consumption in domestic property, resulting in the customized desire referred to by Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996). Redfern (2003) uses the metaphor of fashion to describe marginality where one has a desire to fit in, but also to be individual in tastes and desires. "Marginality is a sufficient as well as a necessary explanation of the motives behind gentrification ….We want our homes to 'say something' about us, just as much as we do our attire" (Redfern, 2003, p. 2364).

Gentrification is linked to the construction of identity through the occupation of space (Butler, with Robson, 2003; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008) or place-making. They choose to stay in the city and pursue the American dream of home ownership by purchasing in transitional neighborhoods. As the area becomes renowned for its culture, gentrifiers begin to shop the real estate and settle. Their extremely profitable conversion of cultural capital into economic capital is a result of place-making, "building connections between space, aesthetics and identity" (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008, p. 120 in reference to Podmore, (1998)). Others view the resulting "place" as a consumption item and it creates a demand for the neighborhood, unleashing a new trend.

Subsequent phases of the gentrification process include the corporate/private financing of neighborhood with apartment or loft construction. Finally, the area supergentrifies as a new class of considerably wealthy residents arrives (Butler & Lees, 2006; Lees, Slater, & Wyly 2008; Lloyd, 2002). The area is gentrified and no longer affordable or distinct to the creative class. Their tastes are legitimized (Bourdieu, 1984/1979; Liu, 2008; Silva, 2006). Along the way, they influence the environment through their wealth and consumption practices (Rose, 1984; Sassen, 1991; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c; Warde, 1991). Neoliberal policy facilitates the construction of new buildings, and an expanding service industry caters to exotic consumption patterns (Redfern, 2003; Warde, 1991). Lofts and coffee shops become common to the areas, as dictated by consumption behaviors.

Regardless of the economic incentives to initiate gentrification, once an area becomes trendy, it has caught on as a desirable place for consumption. That appeal is reflected in the real estate prices (Wells, et al., 2009). A combination of the two theories,

rent-gap and consumption, best explain how gentrification begins based on economics and becomes a consumption practice (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Many variations exist within gentrifying populations (Rose, 1984). In contrast to Rose's (1984) 'alternative lifestyle' gentrifiers, Redfern (2003) asserts that gentrifiers are a new middle class that rejects some of the values of the preceding generation, and they differentiate themselves from their parents by life choices.

One of those choices is an urban residence, where gentrifiers occupy a social space to be distinct (Bourdieu, 1998; Redfern, 2003). As the new middle classes gravitate to urban areas their parents once abandoned, they display "their 'otherness' to the older suburbanizing middle class precisely via their urge to gentrify" (Redfern, 2003, p. 2355). They purchase old bungalows and Victorians in the inner city and increase the property value through their own labor–"sweat equity" (Bridge, 2006, p. 2547; Lees, 2000; Glass, 1964; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). They do not want to be like their parents, who participated in a grand exodus to the suburbs in the 1960s in order to raise two children in a homogenous suburban neighborhood (Redfern, 2003), yet they do want to provide a quality education for their children in an urban area. In the previous section, I discussed the origins and theories behind gentrification. In the next section, I combine the topics of gentrification and school choice.

Gentrifiers' selection of schools and use of social networks in gentrifying neighborhoods is unknown, but evidence suggests gentrifiers operate in distinct social spaces from those of their neighbors and middle-class peers in more affluent neighborhoods. New residents in gentrifying neighborhoods rapidly mobilize because of their vested economic interest in the outcome of complete revitalization of the

community (Martin, 2007), leading to the displacement of one group by another via prestige and power in a geographically bound area (Chernoff, 1980; Martin, 2007). The displaced groups could be economically or racially homogeneous.

Leslie Martin (2008) studied boundary work and children in three of Atlanta's gentrifying neighborhoods, where she found distinct social spaces between long-time residents and new residents. Differences in opinion and behavior divided the residents. While locals waited to see if they could afford to stay or accept the cultural changes brought by gentrification, new residents waited for complete revitalization of their communities (Martin, 2008). A clash of the two residential populations in Martin's study occurred over the lack of activities, drugs and poor school opportunities in Martin's three neighborhoods, with the new residents much more likely to involve the police or third parties in disagreements than the longtime residents who preferred to "work things out" (Martin, 2008, p. 340). A developing distrust between residents was the result of a disconnection in the social spaces and habitus of the two groups.

The differences in approach to community issues and space affect social networks. Further, Martin (2008) found the topic of children to be a particularly useful way to create social distance between long-time residents and new residents in the neighborhood. An awareness of boundary work is essential because I explore the social spaces and social networks of parent-gentrifiers with respect to the strategies and social network influence that occur during the school-selection process.

Education, Capital and Social Networks

Education in the United States has a long history of social reproduction. Public education did not originate with the ideal of equality, but as a means of maintaining and transmitting social position to one's children (Wells, 2004). Historically, the middle class used education to "search for relative advantage, social advancement and mobility" (Ball, 2003, p. 17; Butler, 2003; Griffith & Smith, 2005). The times have changed, but the time investment by families in the education of their children still creates stratification from the start and allows schools to function as an "engine of inequality" (Griffith & Smith, 2005). Middle-class strategies are a large component in the formation of the broader trends of social inequality (Maloutas, 2007, p. 51). Because schools vary greatly in quality and parents choose schools based on their demands, I treat education as a consumption item in this study, exploring what information parent-gentrifiers gain and how as well as their focal awareness as consumers of education.

A quality education is dependent on geography, social, spatial and temporal issues. For parent-gentrifiers, the nexus of urban education, their consumption practices and risk management are ways to react to the variables of a quality education. Because education is the most important aspect of intergenerational reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000/1970; Robson & Butler, 2001), parent-gentrifiers may construct social networks that provide information and influence on their strategies for school selection in urban areas. The effort to construct these networks and access to information may be an aspect of Bourdieu's "scholastic investment energy" and "deliberate inculcation" where cultural capital is directed toward the development and investment of the child (1986, pp. 244 - 245). Lareau and Weininger (2008) describe the middle class orientation to child-

rearing as "concerted cultivation" where "parents view it as their duty to actively foster the development of their children's potential skills and talents" (p. 123). Concerted cultivation results in a middle-class parental approach to institutions and its agents where parents consider it appropriate monitor and intervene on their children's behalf "if they deem that their children's best interests are not being served…"(Lareau & Weininger, 2008, p. 124). How parent-gentrifiers' approach the school-selection process is the foundation of my phenomenographic research.

Parent-gentrification has been a secondary theme in the previous literature. Further, it has been restricted primarily to British [London] society. Butler (1997) wrote one of the first books to include the idea of what I have consistently referred to as parent-gentrification. Butler's research described the small portion of families in London and Hackney during the 1980s, describing a cycling out of neighborhood families when children reached school age. Butler (2003) extended his contributions by focusing on the social integration of gentrifiers and their strategies for creating circuits of schooling.

The results of his study found gentrifiers "unwilling to invest social capital in the area" nor socially integrate their children in the social space of the school systems (Butler, 2003, p. 2469). Butler summarizes the social interaction between the working class and middle-class in his study, "Gentrification has not so much displaced the working class as simply blanked out those who are not like themselves: they do not socialize with them, eat with them or send their children to school with them" (Butler, 2003, p. 2486). More important, parent-gentrifiers, though never a numerical majority in the most gentrified areas of London, were able to define the neighborhoods in their own

image (Butler, 2003) through active place-making in the social space of schools and forming circuits of schooling in their neighborhoods (Ball, et al., 1995).

Karsten (2003) explored the phenomenon of the conversion of Yuppies to Young Urban Professional Parents—YUPPS in Amsterdam (p. 2573). The YUPPS wanted to remain in the city after starting a family and they selected a school that was diverse, but their children were still a majority in student population. The contribution of Karsten's (2003) research is the recognition of the daily life and social space of family gentrifiers in urban areas. Her research briefly mentions the educational issues parents confront in their lifestyle choice. As YUPPS continue to reside in their gentrifying areas, they face choices about where to send their children to school. In prior research, public school enrollment decreased in gentrified areas (Betancur, 2002; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). "School age children spotlight the inadequacies of the location of gentrified families" (Karsten, 2003). Parent-gentrifiers face compelled decision-making due to the reputation and quality of urban schools. Parents feel the need to move to a neighborhood with 'good schools'.

DeSena (2006, 2009) reaffirms the exit of gentrifiers in her research in Brooklyn, New York. Her research perspective is that parent-gentrifiers occupy a shared space in their neighborhood "where meanings get constructed, negotiated, and reworked" (2009, p. 3). Gentrification was found to perpetuate segregation in her study on Greenpoint in Brooklyn, NY as parent-gentrifiers engage in "parallel play", contributing to segregation in the neighborhood (2009, p. 6). They engage in homogenous playdates with "people like us" (DeSena, 2009, p. 65; Butler, 2003; See also Bourdieu, 1990, p. 77). Further,

DeSena (2009) found that parents can learn to "work the system" or homeschool (p. 52), but they tend to reject the public school system.

In the end, the parent-gentrifier [or gentry as DeSena (2006, 2009) refers to her participants] engages in behavior contradictory to the liberal ideology they advocate. DeSena (2009) argues the behaviors of her participants from a macro-perspective and contributes to the neoliberal discussion, "...but the issue is larger than gentrifiers and gentrification. The handiwork of global, unregulated capitalism has brought about all of the changes that ordinary residents have witnessed in Greenpoint," (p. 83). DeSena's (2009) approach to the research on parent-gentrifiers includes an ecological (consumption) perspective, feminism and critical theory. I continue the next section with an analysis of the consumption of education.

Schools and educational advantage are now marketed as a consumption item, rather than part of the social agenda (Rose, 1996). Because school choice is a form of consumption, school selection is a continuous process of risk management (Vincent, 2001). Risk-management must be included in the school-selection process because a retreat from social policies yields the individual responsible for the outcomes (Rose, 1996). Risk management is a process where success cannot be assumed (Vincent & Martin, 2002). Parent-gentrifiers exercise risk-management in the selection of a school. Parents are the actors in the daily experiences of negotiating an education for their children, yet those parents new to the middle class are less confident in their risk taking and face anxiety over their ethical decisions regarding where to send their children to school (Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998a, 2008). They use their social capital to gain cultural capital in the school-selection process. The search for cultural and social capital

may guide or influence parent-gentrifiers' consumption behavior in school selection. In the next section, I explore the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1993, 1998) regarding the forms of capital.

Forms of Capital

Capital, in Marxist terms, is an asset that grows through circulation. "It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Generally, economic, cultural and social capitals are the most commonly referred to forms as introduced by Bourdieu (1986). They take time to accumulate, have the potential to produce profits and reproduce themselves in equal or extended forms, all the while persisting in the objective state that not everything is equally reproduced (Bourdieu, 1986). Learning how to manage the accumulation and reproduction of the forms of capital is a function of education. While economic capital is an inherent component of gentrification under the neoliberal agenda, I focus on the use of cultural capital to beget social capital and how social capital produces cultural capital in parent-gentrifiers' social networks.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is what you know - the combination of "the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18). Cultural capital exists in three forms:

> …institutionalised cultural capital, or formally accredited learning; objectified cultural capital, such as art, books, and the stylistic aspects of interior decoration and furniture; and embodied cultural capital, or the non-accredited and sometimes tacit knowledge, tastes, and dispositions absorbed through participation in a particular habitus. (Bridge, 2006, p. 1966)

This concept in Bourdieu's work was most associated with research on education, consumption and taste (Bourdieu, 1984; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Institutionalized and embodied cultural capital is the requisite knowledge to decode the field of education, giving access and agency to its holder (Reay & Lucey, 2003), and is possessed in high concentrations in the form of gentrifiers' credentials or occupations (Bridge, 2006; Butler, 1997). In this instance, it is an "accumulating asset bearing on social position" (Silva, 2006, p. 1173). Cultural capital affects the activation of parental agency in school selection.

With respect to the advancement of their children's education, the more cultural capital parents possess, the more advantage they have to advance that education via skills and resource knowledge (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Vincent, 2001; Walker, 2010). Parents consume education heavily for social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1998). The social reproduction of the middle class depends on securing institutionalized cultural capital for their children via their social networks and their social capital. Cultural capital is highly prized, but social networks generate a wealth of contacts with consumable information in the school-selection process thus creating social capital. Vincent (2001) discusses the levels of community that generate based on the layers of knowledge, delving down to the deep layer of educational insider. Whom you know may generate a wealth of tacit knowledge of the educational system (cultural capital), and how to use that knowledge to navigate the educational system (social capital).

Amy Stuart Wells (1996) discussed the lack of attention paid to agency and culture in the literature on school choice. Her research included reviewing the Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000) - "how one's view of the world is influenced by the traditional distribution of power and status in society" (Wells, 1996, p. 27), as well as group habitus and cultural logic in school choice. In addition, Wells describes the role of how "...human agency explains why individuals or parents, despite demographic similarities, react to the same set of circumstances and opportunities quite differently" (1996, p. 28). Agency is included in the explanation regarding why parents who choose are more involved in school functions and homework activities. My research explores aspects of the habitus, group habitus, and human agency through the examination of parent-gentrifiers' social networks and lived experiences forming their school-selection process. In the next section, I will discuss social capital as the cultivation of relationships in the school-selection process.

Social Capital

Social capital is the investment and accumulation of a network of mutual acquaintances and the material and immaterial resources one is able to access through those connections (Bourdieu, 1986). The ability to mobilize those investments/embedded resources as needed is intrinsic to social capital (Lin, 1999a). Network members can use membership to access and secure benefits, creating a magnified effect on the capital individually possessed (Bourdieu, 1986; Dinda, 2008; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, 2006). The structure of social networks takes a pyramid shape in most societies

with the most wealthy and resourceful members in the few available positions at the top of the hierarchy, leaving substantial room for inequalities in social capital (Lin, 2000). Social capital is based on the member's initial position in the hierarchy as well as their development of social ties in the network. As they gain connections of equal or higher rank, they gain social capital. The quantity or quality of resources a member can access, as well as their location in the social network, factors in to one's social status in the network (Lin, 2000). The results of the embedded resources in a social network include the flow of information, exerting influence on decision-makers, social ties perceived as social credentials, and the reinforcement of identity and recognition through social relations (Lin, 1999b). In the next section, I discuss the activation of social capital in social networks.

According to Lin (1999a), social capital has two models. The accessed social capital model considers one's initial position in social networks based on their education, experiences, parental status, and their current social ties. All of this combined can be used to determine the accessible amount of social capital resources (Lin, 1999a). In other words, accessed social capital pertains to one's potential contributions to the social network. In contrast, the mobilized social capital model considers one's education, their network resources along with the strength of their social ties as measured by intimacy, and the category role of the resource (Lin, 1999a). In general, the formation of social networks tends to be homogenous groups of similar socioeconomic characteristics with each society demonstrating inequality in social capital. However, when social networks are heterogeneous and cross-group ties are included, the variety of information and value

of the resources embedded in the social network are greater because there is a greater variation in the knowledge and its exchange within the network.

The social network is resource-rich, as evidenced by the two models, and the likelihood of useful information occurring in a routine exchange is far greater than when all members are from the same social group (Lin, 2000). The information that floats around resource-rich networks is of a quality that one seldom needs to mobilize his social capital. However, those most likely to benefit from the dissemination of information in heterogeneous social networks are the more disadvantaged members of the group.

Together, the forms of cultural, social and economic capital are capable of converting to one another, and they are synergistic because they also feed off one another, yielding a higher value than the sum of the individual types (Bourdieu, 1986). Lin (1999a) states that well-connected parents and social ties can indeed enhance the opportunities for individuals to obtain better credentials. Parents' social status and connections can make the difference in educational outcomes for their children. The cultivation of those connections upon entrance to preschool and school transitions may peak because parents seek to maximize the possible opportunities for their children.

Bourdieu believed that social capital was a privileged good that was used for the social reproduction of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 1999b). Three decades of research support the idea that social capital, in the form of social resources, makes a significantly larger contribution to status attainment than even education and work experience (Lin, 1999a). Most mothers and fathers with preschool children experience negative effects on their social networks until their children are six years old (Lin, 2000). When their children approach school age, their social networks expand.

The lived experience of school selection is an important time for social capital accumulation because parents join organizations and seek ties across geographic and ethnic boundaries. The quality of parents' network resources will increase and expand as well as the flow and influence of information regarding "circuits of schooling" (Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1995, p. 57). Parents build social capital through their social networks and use that information to select schools. Ball and Vincent (1998) found "It is almost impossible to find a transcript where parents do not refer to drawing upon the impressions and experiences of friends, neighbours and relatives in their choice-making" (pp. 377-378; Ball, 2006, pp. 237-238). My research focuses on parent-gentrifiers' accumulation of social capital via their social networking experience and the influence of the information derived from that social capital on their school-selection process. In the next section, I present the context of social networks with respect to boundaries and social space.

Social Networks

Neighborhood boundaries and social space influence social networks. The role of the Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) in Atlanta gives structure to neighborhood boundaries. Geographic boundaries help shape the social networks of a neighborhood (Healey, Haynes, & Hampshire, 2007). The NPU boundaries are utilized to form community boundaries for public services such zones for police precincts. Further, they serve as the local advisory council, making recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on planning, zoning, and land use as well as a forum to inform citizens of all city government functions (City of Atlanta Online, n.d.). Other physical space such as the

attendance boundaries of Parkside Elementary or the Neighborhood Charter School in Grant Park and Kirkwood's Toomer Elementary School are designed by the school system. In this section, I return to the concept of place-making as it pertains to social spaces and social networking.

School is one of the social spaces that yield social networks. The building blocks of social existence for gentrifiers are "children, friendships, history, locality and work" (Butler, with Robson, 2003). Children provide a common ground for friendships because they [children] are a large, longitudinal time investment. Parents' time investment puts them in contact with others to form a social network. The more time they invest the more social capital and history they build in their social networks. Such an investment yields social capital with other parents (Ball, 2003, 2006; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2003a, 2003b, 2008), and, subsequently, schools (Ball, 2003; Redfern, 2003; Robson & Butler, 2001). The networks and the social capital that they generate are strongly "based on a mutual habitus, a sharing of perspectives and of a sense of common self-interest and therefore confidence in the opinion of these significant others" or social exclusivity (Ball, 2006, p. 104).

Organized activities for children are the most important information exchange in parental social networks (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, 2006; Neild, 2005). From the human geography perspective, these parents are forming a place by creating memories and attachment. Cresswell (2004) argues "When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way, it becomes a place" (p. 10). Likewise, they establish a social network and social space in which they exchange information.

The dissemination of information regarding school quality occurs primarily through these social networks or places. Parents interview each other to gain a perspective on the schools, building dossiers on the schools or the "circuits of schooling" (Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1995, p. 57; Ball, 2006). Social networking is the foundation for access and agency, operating as a veiled part of parent's work. Building relationships with other parents creates networks that serve as sounding boards and troubleshooting instruments (Lareau & Shumar, 1996).

Social networks develop from parental supervision and attendance of their children's activities. Enormous amounts of time and energy are devoted to the intense work of ensuring social reproduction, including the development of social networks (Ball, 2006; McNeal, 1999). The information exchanged in the form of recommendations or warnings in these social networks is taken quite seriously (Neild, 2005). A parent's role involves organized activities, information, and routine. Their information is the result of finely crafted social networks of social and cultural capital (Reay, 1998a; Vincent & Martin, 2002). Social networks are significant sources of information regarding the issue of formal or informal school selection.

Parents' knowledge of the available circuits of schooling options originate in this network (Ball, et al., 1995; Ball, 2006). Who goes to the school is as important as the grapevine knowledge about the school to the extent that many in Holme's (2002) study rejected schools without visiting them, basing their decisions on information from other parents in their social network and specifically choosing based on the attendance of other high social status families.

Social networks have a substantial impact on community members' resources and power because they provide access to socially exclusive information (Healey, Haynes, & Hampshire, 2007). The more vested a parent is in their community's social networks, the greater options he has in their child's education because he is more often "in the know". Parents interact with other parents to gain access to beneficial information in their social network (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Parents who are not part of these networks may be denied access to certain types of information through exclusion (Goldring & Hausman, 1999). Being a networked and involved parent provides substantial power in the form of collective access and agency (or "spatial power and cultural capital" (Walker & Clark, 2010, p. 242).

Gentrification compounds the intensity of social networks within the boundaries of time and space because new residents may try to build community through place-making and expedite the revitalization of the neighborhood. Thus, the amplification of social capital through parental involvement creates a relationship not only with other parents, but with social space as well. In those social spaces, parents engage in activities that form place-attachments. The networking occurs on and off the soccer field where the main cost of obtaining social capital such as education is parents' time, also referred to as parents' opportunity cost (Fan, 2008).

One way to reap the benefit of social networking is to use a Social Networking Site (SNS) such as Facebook or MySpace. Such forms of social networking allow what Massey (1994) refers to as time-space compression— the movement and communication across space and the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and our experiences within this realm. I include the use of SNS to view how parents incorporate

technological communication to socially network during the school-selection process. In the next section, I examine the role of taste or influence on SNS and their potential influence on social networks.

Social Networks Sites

Cybernetworks is the term sociologist Nan Lin (1999b) attributed to the vast amount of social capital known as the Internet. Lin (1999b) countered the notion that social capital in the United States was declining by offering Cybernetworks as sites of "a revolutionary rise in social capital" (Lin, 1999b, p. 45). Cybernetworks offered access to a large base of data, creating an incalculable rate of acquisition and networking where a majority of the activities revolved around the creation and use of social capital (Lin, 1999b). Today, social network sites (SNS) or Online Social Networks (OSN) are specific sites dedicated to the cultivation and maintenance of social capital, organized around people and their social networks. They are a rapidly growing global phenomenon, yet they are new to academic research.

The first SNS that allowed the perusal of members' social connections, like SNS of today, was Sixdegrees.com, founded in 1997 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Various technical and social issues held the real surge in popularity back until 2003. MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld and Bebo are all examples of SNS that have integrated into the daily practices of millions of users. Most SNS support pre-existing social ties and the maintenance of those relationships while a minority utilize themes such a politics or social interests to unite a base of users (Abbas, Pouwelse, Epema, & Sips, 2009; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Their characteristics are that they are web-based services that allow the

creation of a public profile, a list of their social connections and the ability to browse through those posted social connections (Abbas, Pouwelse, Epema, & Sips, 2009; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Joinson, 2008). The articulation and public display of one's social connections makes SNS especially unique (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The ability to leave comments, send messages and post profile status are typical features of a SNS.

Research on social network development states that people tend to create and repeat communication patterns (Malinka & Shäfer, 2009). These patterns can include the daily use of SNS to track the trends of the status group to which users belong. Users tend to connect in a snowball, gossip-fashion that has largely repetitive components/patterns of communication. The development of SNS may occur in gossip-fashion where users, themselves, handle all of the networking (Abbas, Pouwelse, Epema, & Sips, 2009). Parent-gentrifiers may have a specific SNS that they utilize to network regarding the topic of school selection.

While SNS are designed for a wide audience, they have a tendency to attract homogeneous groups or geographically concentrated groups like Orkut, which is a prime example of an English-only SNS whose user base transformed it into a Brazilian social tool (Abbas, Pouwelse, Epema, & Sips, 2009; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook, another example, was founded in 2004 as a social network site for those who had a harvard.edu email address. By 2006, it expanded to everyone from high school students to corporate officers (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Joinson, 2008). By February 2010, Facebook had 400 million users, the largest SNS, and Buzz, a new addition to Gmail had 176 million members using similar features (Helft & Stone, 2010). An important aspect of all SNS is that they show public displays of connections which serve to form the identity of the user

(Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Donath & Boyd, 2004). Public displays of connections serve to create a profile of who I am based on who I know, or, rather, a parade of who is in your social capital pyramid.

Liu (2008) researched user profiles for the taste statements users make about themselves. Their statements typically serve to either assert their prestige or differentiate themselves from their peers (Liu, 2008). The self-profile serves to aesthetically influence the "taste public" that share values and common methods of utilizing cultural resources as opposed to economic capital or education (cultural capital) (Liu, 2008, p.256). In other words, the self -profile serves to generate social capital through the display of one's mobilized social capital. The display of one's social network may lend credibility and influence to one's comments. Holme's (2002) found the status of parents and the information exchanged in their social network regarding the quality of schools was based on the social status of who attended those schools rather than information about the quality of the schools. Therefore, the social status of users and the display of their social networks SNS may influence others' school choice based on their commentary regarding schools and choices in the school selection process.

Users of SNS receive emotional support, perpetual contact and information resources from their sites - sources of access and social capital (Joinson, 2008). The gratification of generating social capital is significant to the use of Facebook because one builds, invests and maintains ties (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006; Joinson, 2008). Further, Liu, Maes, and Davenport (2006) detail the influence of SNS on consumption patterns by what they call the "taste fabric". The trends of the users' SNS group can be influential. The use of SNS in the social networking of gentrifying parents provides

another venue for information exchange. I question whether parent-gentrifiers exchange influential information regarding schools as a consumption item or school selection on social networking sites.

School Selection

At one point in time, most children attended their neighborhood school. A response to the post-Brown era and the United States' low educational achievement was to open up the market of public education and create school choice (Friedman, 1962/2002; Moe, 2001). Choice renders the illusion of equity because everyone has an opportunity to choose, but choice originates from forms of capital, whether it is economic, social or cultural creating inherent advantage with respect to socio-economic inequalities. I argue that the school selection process is influenced by parents' available forms of capital within the realm of their available school options.

School choice is broken down into two categories for my research purposes. Formalized school choice operates within a structured framework of education options formulated by school districts, cities or states. Those who are not eligible or involved in formal school choice options still strategize to maximize their children's competitive position and gain access to good schools/elite universities, resulting in informal school choice (Ball, 2003, p. 20; Reay, 1998a). Informal school choice operates outside of the formally structured framework to integrate all options including those that may fall under the radar of school attendance administrators. Informed parents seek information, make choices with regard to their situational constraints, and are able to communicate about the

circuits of education in their neighborhood because they have the access to information and the agency to do something with that information.

Barbara Ehrenreich (1990) argues that from the moment a child is born into the middle class; his social class status is tenuous and relative to the amount of education obtained in life. Further, Nagel (1991) argues that social class "depends on the special interest people take in their relatives, especially their children" (pp. 109-110). Nagel (1991) extends this idea into the area of giving competitive advantage to one's children through quality education where the personal interest of one's offspring will never be secondary to the impersonal social good. Nagel's division of the personal and impersonal creates a role for the parents in this study because "public institutions alone do not determine opportunities" (Nagel, 1991, p. 111). Social class and stratification are highly swayed by family. "It is a function not only of ability but of class, since so much education and culture is transmitted informally through the family, and much of the motivation which directs individuals toward higher pursuits is also due to family influence" (Nagel, 1991, p. 132). Education is central to the formation of the middle class. Brantlinger (2003) argues that school achievement defines the middle class and its ability to counter fate. Because education remains the best tool for middle-class reproduction, maintenance and mobility, parents strive to choose the best school and create the best circumstances for their children.

Middle-class parents seek school information using their access to resources and agency to shape the education of their children. One tool for evaluation is a school's performance under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Wells & Holme, 2005). Schools' test scores and accountability measures such as report cards are readily available

for parental perusal. However, schools with social and economic advantage will experience accountability standards in different ways with regard to No Child Left Behind [NCLB] (Lipman, 2004). High performing schools with small minority populations (subgroups) that are not performing well on standardized tests as a subgroup will affect the overall NCLB performance. These scores are reported and identify who was not on par with their peers by subgroup. A school that does not meet the standards of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) may be placed on a failing list to meet improvement standards. After a second year of failing to meet AYP standards, parents have the choice to select another school option within the district.

As testing raises consciousness about how subgroups perform, parents are increasingly cognizant of the scores through the annual report card for each school. Schools with more racially and socioeconomically diverse student populations have, on the average, lower overall test scores than their more affluent and predominantly White counterparts, feeding perceptions that these diverse schools are not as "good" (p. 189). Parents' interpretation and reaction to reported test scores may influence their school selection process.

Prospective middle-class homebuyers use test score results as criteria to evaluate potential properties (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Godwin & Kemerer, 2002). "Often newly resegregated schools appear on the official list of failing schools sanctioned under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" (Boger & Orfield, 2005, p. 3). A good school signifies one that yields good test results and annually makes Adequate Yearly Progress. Schools that do not meet AYP standards develop a negative image and reputation.

Good schools have reputations for producing high quality results. Likewise, poor schools have reputations for low quality results. Ultimately, public schools respond to and reflect the culture, socioeconomics and demographics of their constituencies (Noguera, 2003). They emulate the social conditions of their environment and are blamed for the outcomes of those constraints (Fuller & Elmore, 1996). While it is found that lower socioeconomic students do better when placed in middle socioeconomic status (SES) schools, parents may question what happens to the upper SES student placed in a situation surrounded by many lower SES students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2009).

Previous research indicates that the upper SES student performs poorly in majority low SES schools due to the culture of despair peer effect stemming from low achievement and motivation (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Zahirovic-Herbert & Turnbull, 2009). Rumberger and Palardy (2005) found the socioeconomic status of the school to be as significant to a student's success as his own socioeconomic status. These results are dependent on the right combination of students for either outcome (Brantlinger, 2003). Parent-gentrifiers absorb information about their school environment in the process of school selection.

Parents consider the reputation of schools based on socioeconomic status, race and academic achievement (Ball, 2003; Frankenberg, 2005; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Zahirovic-Herbert & Turnbull, 2009). In transitional areas, where schools tend to be majority low-income, minority and low-performing, the selection process is difficult. For this reason, middle-class parents are competitive and intense about where their children

go to school (Brantlinger, 2003; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Weininger, 2008).

The local neighborhood school may not represent the values and aspirations any group of parents has for their children's education. Nevertheless, parent-gentrifiers may possess the social and cultural capital as well as the agency to create viable options for their children. Wells & Holme (2005) argue that parents with resources and political clout often leave "bad" schools, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Wells & Holme, 2005, p. 189). The schools lose the parents who contribute forms of capital and agency that may fight for their success.

Urban public schools are often in transition and have poor academic achievement ratings, yet traditional attendance zones place students based on the location of their home. "The most important feature of attendance boundaries …is that they are what home owners use when forming their expectations about the local schools" (Zahirovic-Herbert & Turnbull, 2009, p. 1104). Boundaries also constitute neighborhoods. Parents' reactions to neighborhood schools vary from moving (exiting the neighborhood), choosing a private school or "working the system," meaning respondents try to use their resources in the assigned public schools to track or request preferential treatment for their children (Butler, 1997, p. 146; Robson & Butler, 2001).

The parental pressure to perform in the school selection process is widespread because parents demand more for their children from their schools than previous generations, because more is at stake with flattening, diminishing job prospects (Ball, 2003, 2006). While funding disappears from schools under a neoliberal agenda, students are expected to do more, earlier, with less (Griffith & Smith, 2005). Parents choosing the

public school have previously been characterized to have low economic capital. Poupeau, François, & Couratier, (2007) found public school choice to be more characteristic of high cultural/low economic parent strategies while high cultural/high social capital families transferred to schools outside the district and private schools. Conversely, middle-class parents send their children to public schools, but demand an advanced curriculum (Noguera, 2003). The consequence of advanced classes and advanced curriculum is within-school segregation (Noguera, 2003; Clodfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005).

Outside of school, preferential or differentiated treatment such as within-school segregation contributes to a divide in community relations (Noguera, 2003). As the private capital and corporate/commercial investments give rise to urban villages and communities, they also attempt to reform the image of the public school. Education is a key to the reproduction of the middle class, yet gentrifying neighborhoods are not renowned for superior schools. Recognizing the importance of education to urban revitalization, these cities market to the middle-class sector of the education market where "family strategies for selecting schools play an ever greater role" (Poupeau, François, & Couratier, 2007, p. 34). Cities like Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia understand this phenomenon and are trying to create public schools that appeal to the residents for the cities' long-term stability (Cucchiara, 2008). For some parents, the next step is a collaboration of their access to resources and their agency in the formation of charter schools.

Charter Schools and Community Collaboration

An example of parental social networks, community and collaboration is the establishment of a charter school. Neoliberal policies have created a roll-back or recidivism in the state provision of social welfare services and urban regeneration (Peck & Tickell, 2002). As a result, there are social responsibilities or gaps for citizens to fill. Education is one such social contract.

Pauline Lipman (2004, 2008, 2011) argues that neoliberalism plays out in urban schools through pathologizing their circumstances as a call for rejuvenation, leading to district disinvestment and school closings that subsequently reopen under private control. She includes charter schools, but focuses on corporate-controlled charters. In certain circumstances, neighborhoods and communities unite to form charter schools. In Grant Park, the opportunity to fill the social contract void in education permitted parent-gentrifiers to assume such a role. Hankins (2007), in reference to a newspaper article about the Neighborhood Charter School, comments on the article.

> This article, featured in the "Metro" section of the newspaper, largely celebrates the renovated building and the effort put forth by the gentrifiers in Grant Park (and OrmewoodPark). Furthermore, it captures the change in the role of gentrifiers from: transient entrants to transformational agents and community builders (p. 125).

The creation of the Neighborhood Charter School relied on the volunteer labor of professional parents to create a school, but I argue their input mirrors their educational ideals, values and habitus. By privileging those who are willing to put forth the effort, charter schools are an alternative school option based on the image of the dominant culture because they are founded on various forms of capital investment from parent-citizens with the power to make the charter happen. Serving as extreme examples of

educational place-making, charter schools lead to uneven citizenship opportunities in education that must call into question: Who is served? And Where?

Developing a charter school can be a lengthy process. Because my fifth research assumption involves the parallel relationship of stages of gentrification to complexity of social networks, I argue the appearance of charter schools in gentrifying neighborhoods results from the development of community cohesion, infrastructure and social networking. The type of cohesion required to unite the social, cultural and economic capital into the creation of a charter school would occur in the latter stages of gentrification. Therefore, Grant Park is included in my research to demonstrate the social networking and parental involvement of a community in the later stages of second-wave gentrification. Kirkwood is in the earlier stages of gentrification, and school selection strategies may differ from those of Grant Park. The variation in research sites is expected to produce sound phenomenographic data.

In the next section, I provide the current situation of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools with a brief history of White flight, desegregation and reputation. Because gentrification is a reintroduction of the middle class and a potentially different racial or ethnic group, the theme of this section focuses on race and class in terms of segregation.

Atlanta, Georgia

In 1970, Atlanta was more segregated than it had been in 1940 (Kruse, 2005, p. 237). The city was distinctly sectioned off into Black and White neighborhoods, where Blacks remained concentrated in the south and central parts of the city, and Whites in the north throughout the 1970s (Kruse, 2005). Decades later, Atlanta is still one of the most segregated cities in the United States (Keating, 2001). Serving as a popular site for

relocation in the 1990s, Atlanta evolved into the second largest population magnet in the country in 1995-2000, with a high net immigration of 68.4% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Included in these numbers was Atlanta growth via gentrification (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Thirty-three percent of the migration occurred into more residentially integrated areas of the same county. Residential integration in the four counties comprising metro Atlanta [Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton] increased more than counties surrounding Atlanta (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c). A majority of Atlanta immigrants in 1995-2000 were between the 25-39 years of age, carrying potentially a heavy influence on society through childbearing capacity and human capital longevity due to their young age (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003c). Restated, Atlanta had, and still has, a substantial population of potential parents moving into integrated residential areas.

The 1996 Olympics took place in Atlanta. Prior to and since the Olympics, many projects mobilized to empower and revitalize the downtown area as well as stimulate gentrification (Kruse, 2005). All project-based housing in the downtown area has been evacuated, demolished, and scheduled to be rebuilt as mixed-income multi-family units by 2012. This large-scale renovation is not without consequence to the social service programs of the city, providing two examples of the neoliberal agenda. The Atlanta Public School system enrolls many students from these housing areas, and has felt the changing forces in the community as these residents dispersed to other parts of the city or the suburbs.

My research focuses on two gentrifying neighborhoods, and an assumption that the evolution of parental social networks parallels the gentrification level of a

neighborhood. In choosing neighborhoods in which to concentrate this research, I looked for areas that qualified as being in the process of gentrification as opposed to those already gentrified (DeSena, 2006; Warde, 1991). The more gentrified an area was, the more school options were potentially available for residents.

Atlanta is experiencing residential integration, yet Atlanta's public schools are more segregated than housing patterns predict (Reardon & Yun, 2005, pp. 61-63). Four counties converge into metropolitan Atlanta. Each county has its own school system with the exception of the area inside the I-285 perimeter of Atlanta. Within the I-285 perimeter is the City of Atlanta, the zoned attendance area of Atlanta Public Schools. Other school districts within the perimeter are Fulton County Schools, Dekalb County Schools and the City of Decatur Schools. Fulton County Schools and Dekalb County Schools do not have the same concentration of gentrifying or gentrified neighborhoods; instead, they represent a suburban population. Decatur City Schools is a gentrified neighborhood in a separate school system. Gentrification primarily occurs within the neighborhoods zoned for attendance in Atlanta Public Schools. My study is limited to one school district, Atlanta Public Schools and more specifically, two neighborhoods that are in a state of gentrification: Kirkwood and Grant Park.

A public school is a "public service attached to a particular location" (Zahirovic-Herbert & Turnbull, 2009, p. 1112), and these two neighborhoods cluster around the downtown Atlanta area with Atlanta Public Schools being the designated school system servicing Kirkwood and Grant Park (Figure 1). The neighborhoods were chosen because they represent variation in the stages of neighborhood gentrification. In the next two

sections, I discuss the characteristics of Kirkwood and Grant Park in detail with supplemental figures.

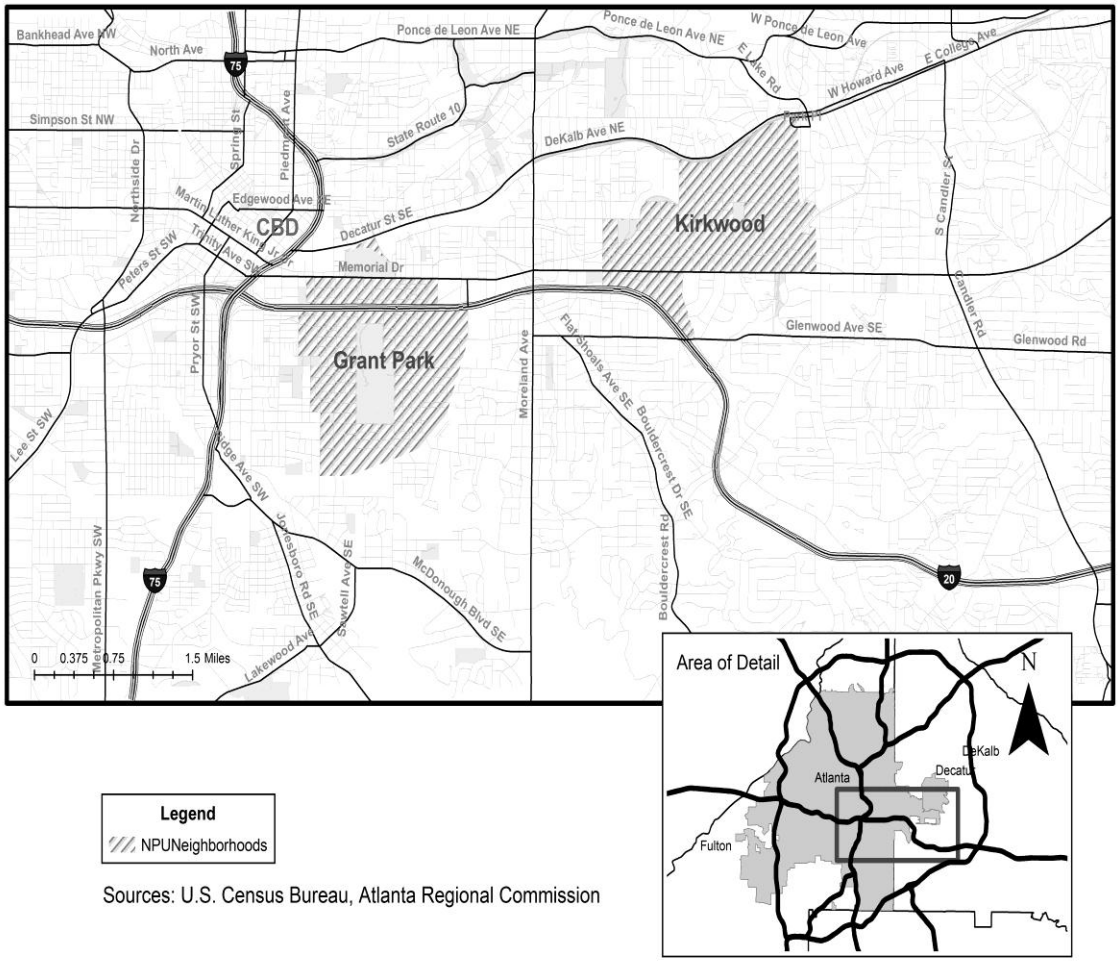

Figure 1. Neighborhoods in Study. Source: Chapman (2011).

The two neighborhoods investigated in this study, Grant Park and Kirkwood are shaded (Figure 1), as well as their relationship to Atlanta proper in the area detail. Note their

proximity to the intersection of Interstate 20 and Interstate 75/85, which approximates the center of downtown Atlanta.

Kirkwood

Kirkwood is a 1.85 square mile community, located 5 miles east of downtown Atlanta. Originally established in 1899, Kirkwood served as an independent streetcar suburb of Atlanta until its annexation to Atlanta in 1922. Kirkwood was an all-White suburb from 1910 to 1950. In the late 1950s, there was a transition from an all-White population to a predominantly African American population in Kirkwood and Atlanta, in general, as the City of Atlanta Board of Education slowly integrated (Hornsby, 1991). White flight characterized the neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1980s saw a reverse trend in the composition of Kirkwood's neighborhoods as people began to return to the city in diverse social and ethnic groups (Kirkwood Neighbors Organization, 2007). The influx of a White population in Kirkwood contributed to racial conflict in the early stages of gentrification and did not occur peacefully (Atlanta City Council, 2001). Today Kirkwood is a gentrifying area along with Avondale Estates, Decatur, Atlanta, East Atlanta, Grant Park and Little 5 Points (Kirkwood Neighbors Organization, 2007). Kirkwood is a relatively newer gentrifying neighborhood when compared with Grant Park, a nearby historic neighborhood that experienced gentrification at least ten years prior to Kirkwood. Kirkwood homes are typically 2-3 bedroom detached homes and the home values averaged $192,000 in 2007, but have since dropped to $176, 137 (CityData, 2007a; CityData, 2011a). Kirkwood has 18% fewer mortgages than Grant Park. Fewer mortgages would indicate an older population because there are fewer rental units than owners in the neighborhood (CityData, 2011a). The population has a high proportion of

service, sales and office occupations with a 2009 median household income of $45, 793 (CityData, 2011). The Kirkwood neighborhood is approximately 59% Black and 37% White, based on the four census tracts 205–208 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011a). Of married-couple households, 44% are dual-income (CityData, 2011a). Finally, Kirkwood has a large population of children–almost twice as many as Grant Park, yet only 0.9% attends a private school between the ages of 3-18 (CityData, 2007).

Kirkwood parents have the option of signing up for the Kirkwood Babies & Kids Yahoo! Group by subscribing on the Yahoo! site. The list-serve was created to help Kirkwood Neighborhood parents connect with other parents, answer childcare and parenting questions, and provide a forum for parents to talk about parent/child related topics (Kirkwood Babies & Kids Group, n.d., ¶1). The list-serve and Yahoo! group serve as the neighborhood parents' form of communication. In addition, the Kirkwood Neighborhood Organization website and newsletter serve to keep residents informed of neighborhood information between monthly meetings. In the next section, I provide maps to demonstrate the area of research interest.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 include the layout of the City of Atlanta in the top map with blue shading located within Fulton County and a small part of Dekalb County, which also identifies the boundaries of the Atlanta Public School system. Figures 2 and 3 provide a spatial view of the relationship of NPU-O and Kirkwood in relation to the city of Atlanta. The larger map of Figure 2 demonstrates the Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) O that consists of Kirkwood, East Lake, and Edgewood. Neighborhood Planning Units host monthly meetings, which could be sites for social networking and information exchange.

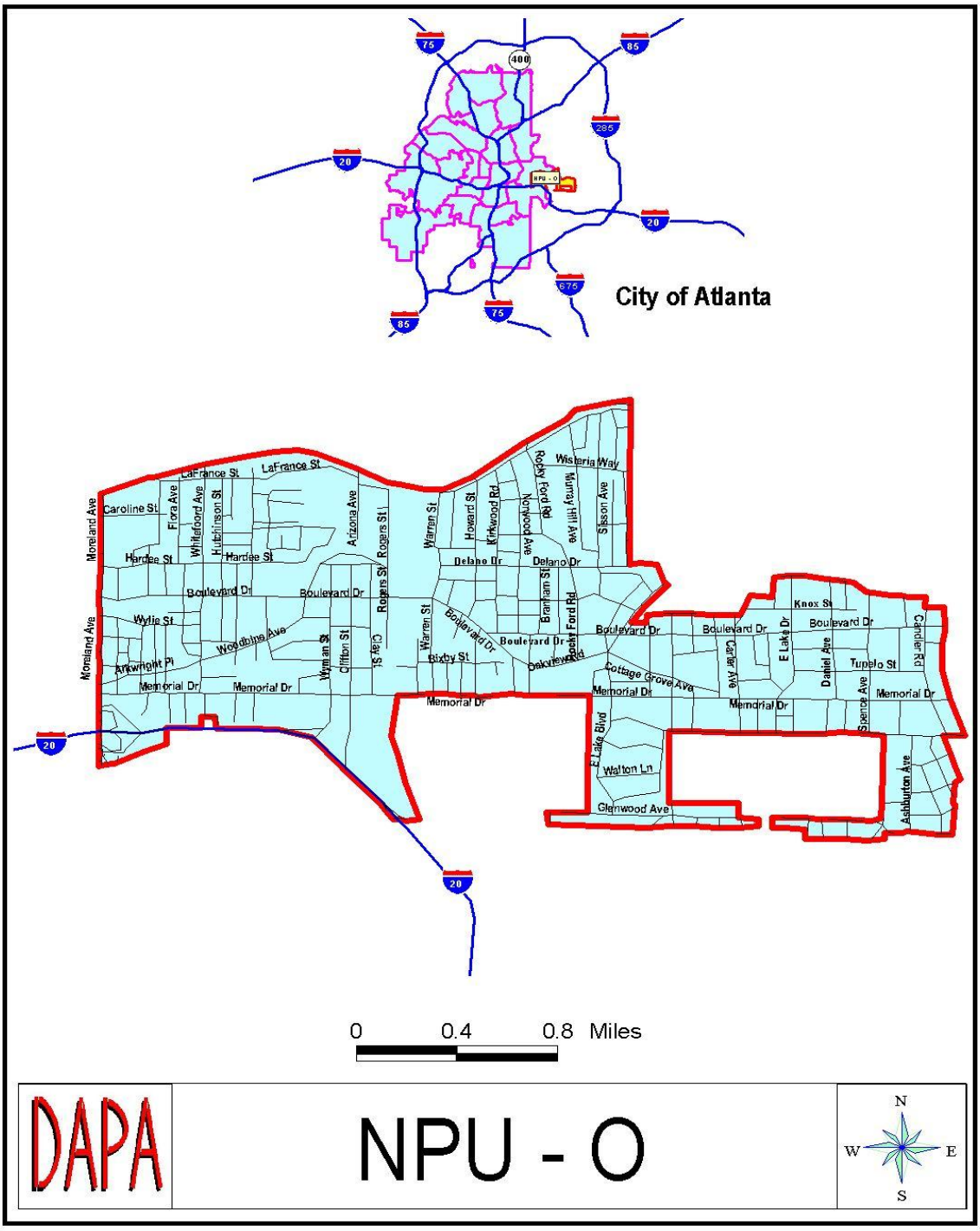

Figure 2. Neighborhood Planning Unit O
Source: *http://www.arch.gatech.edu/~dapa/reports/atlneighchg/page-Images/npuo-m.html*.

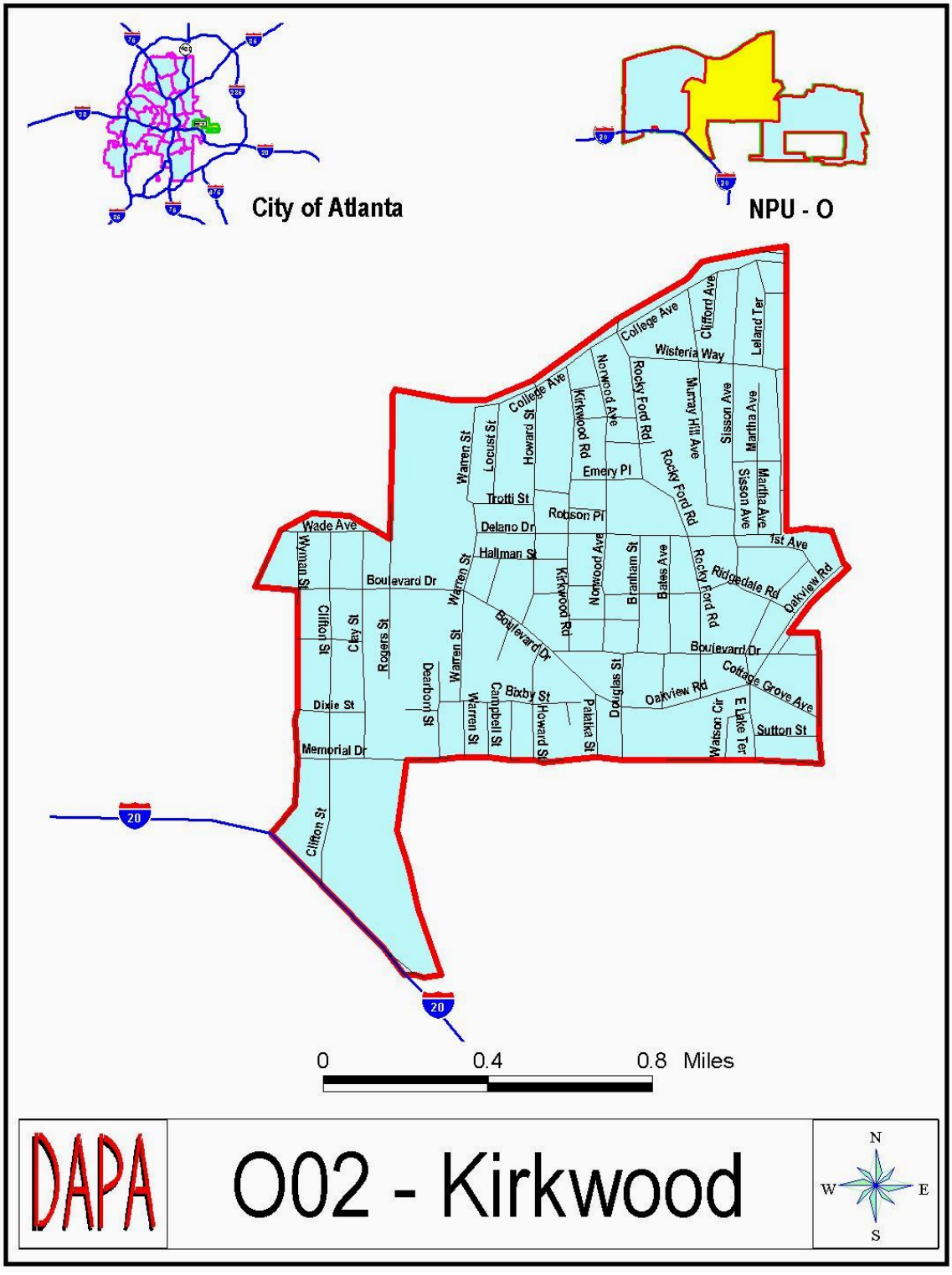

Figure 3. Kirkwood Neighborhood Boundaries.
Source: http://www.arch.gatech.edu/~dapa/reports/atlneighchg/page-Images/o02m.html

Grant Park

The Grant Park neighborhood was populated in from the 1890s to the 1950s by middle and upper-middle–class families (Grant Park Neighborhood Association, n.d.). Craftsman and Victorian homes surround the area. Restoration and revitalization efforts began in the early 1970s through the 1990s creating an increasingly gentrified and affluent neighborhood bordering the Atlanta Zoo. By 2001, home sales were 2.65 times the sales price from 1975-1981 (Atlanta City Council, 2001). Grant Park is a historic neighborhood characterized by high home values that averaged $335,000 in 2007, dropping to $304,724 as of 2009 (CityData, 2007b; CityData, 2011b). The median household income in 2009 was $58, 274 (CityData, 2011b). Of the married-couple households, 75% are dual income households in 2009 (CityData, 2011b).

Grant Park began to experience gentrification in the 1980s (Aka, 2010; Keating, 2009). The population in Grant Park, census tract 50, was 68% White, 25% Black in 2010 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011b) and the occupations are predominantly professional (CityData, 2011b).

While the average age is 33-34, children represent approximately 18% of the neighborhood population. Private school attendance for 3-18 year olds is almost 14% - a high number considering the existence of the Neighborhood Charter School and the relatively new public school, Parkside Elementary (CityData, 2007b). In 1997, Atlanta Public Schools zoned Grant Park children into five different elementary schools in Atlanta Public Schools.

> In fact, when parents from the Grant Park neighborhood began to explore the Atlanta Public Schools options for public elementary schools in their region in 1997, they discovered that their neighborhood alone was zoned to five schools (Slaton, Stanton, Cook, Gordon, and West. Figure 3.17), (Hankins, 2004, p. 71).

Parents typically moved out when their children reached school age, so a goal of the community was to establish a charter school that would stop flow of middle-class residents out of the neighborhood. Hankins (2007) states, "In fact, the founding goal of the charter school was to keep middle-class residents in the area" (p. 120). Grant Park's community efforts resulted in the formation of the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School.

Grant Park also boasts a well-developed website for parents to access information regarding the Grant Park Parents Network newsletter, recreational activities/parks, nanny employment/sharing and pediatrician references, a calendar of events for children, playgroups and registration, a business directory for the neighborhood, and a list of 31 current school options, including public, private and preschool. During the research process, I was admitted as a member and allowed to post my research flyer on the network through the kindness and support of a participant. Such support is not uncommon on the website. Parents may connect to the Grant Park Parent Network. In order to receive the bi-weekly newsletter, or be listed in the member directory, registration to become a member is necessary. Free membership extends to Grant Park families. Non-residents in Grant Park may join the GPPN for a one-time fee of $15 per family. After registering online, new members are directed to contact the playgroup coordinator for their child's age in order to join the appropriate playgroup.

Figures 4 and 5 provide a spatial view of the relationship of (NPU) W and Grant Park to the City of Atlanta in the top right corner.

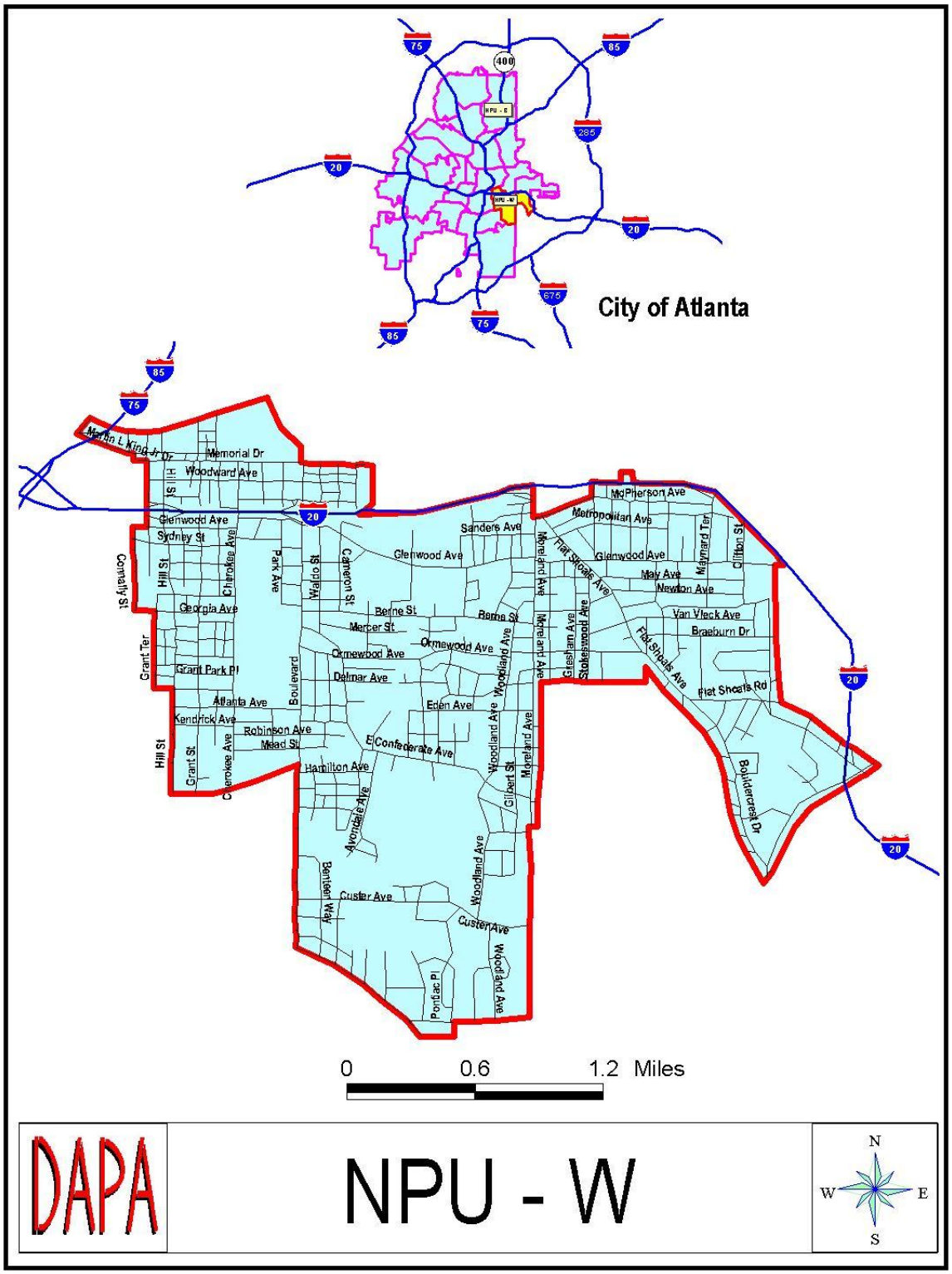

Figure 4. Neighborhood Planning Unit W
Source: http://www.arch.gatech.edu/~dapa/reports/atlneighchg/page-Images/npuw-m.html.

NPU-W includes Grant Park as well as the communities of Ormewood Park, East Atlanta, Boulevard Heights-Woodland Hills, and Benteen-Custer Avenue neighborhoods (Figure 4). The twenty-five Neighborhood Planning Units host monthly meetings, which could be a site for social networking and information exchange, so the geographic boundaries of those NPUs are included. The Neighborhood Planning Units are composed of elected chairpersons or presiding officers that work to facilitate community planning.

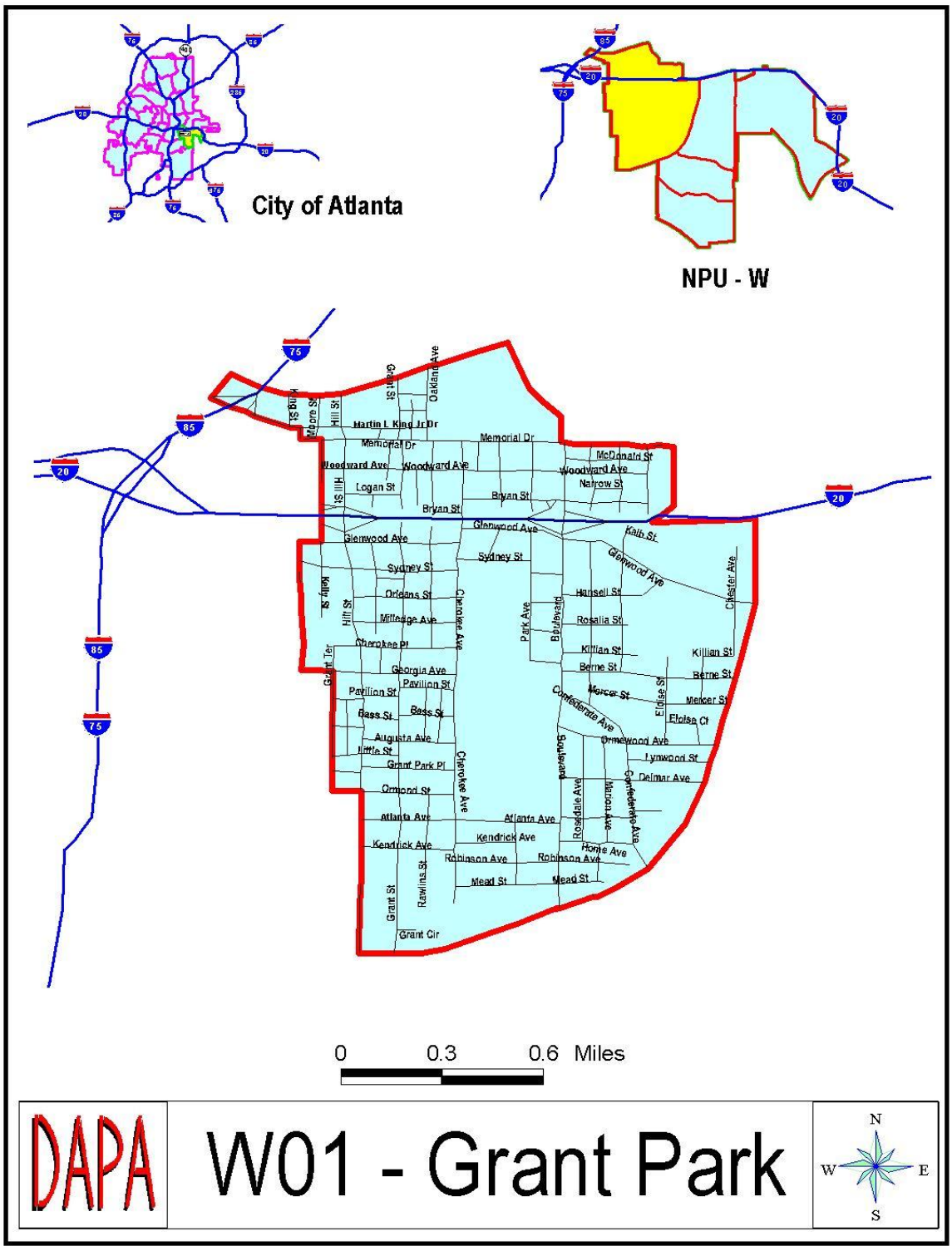

Figure 5. Grant Park Neighborhood Boundaries.
Source: *http://www.arch.gatech.edu/~dapa/reports/atlneighchg/page-Images/w01m.html*

The Grant Park map (Figure 5) specifically depicts the boundaries of Grant Park. In addition, the map of NPU-W serves to identify admission priority for applicants to the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School. The Neighborhood Charter School admits students in three phases, based on the following order. First priority goes to Grant Park or Ormewood Park residents. The next priority is for students living in NPU-W that includes Benteen, Boulevard Heights, Custer/McDonough/Guice, East Atlanta, Grant Park, Ormewood Park, North Ormewood Park, and Woodland Hills. The last wave of priority admissions is for residents within an Atlanta Public school zone, but outside of NPU-W. In this section, I reviewed the geography of the focus neighborhoods. In the next section, I will review the public school system serving Kirkwood and Grant Park, Atlanta Public Schools.

Atlanta Public Schools

Founded in the colonial period of 1642-1776, public education in the United States primarily served as a means of educating future generations to read the Bible and understand civic notices in the community. Later, district schools were usually one-room with one teacher for all students without differentiation amongst grade levels. The graded levels of education did not appear until the 1840s after McGuffey's readers were introduced to over 120 million American students (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). The schools began at the district level with individual communities agreeing to tax themselves to pay a teacher for anywhere from a few days to a few months of instruction. School building ranged according to the wealth of the community and geographic setting. Although Horace Mann, the first school superintended in the United States, wrote widely

about the need to standardize all elements of schooling from the school house to the students' chairs, blackboards and books, few communities granted the funds to actualize his vision. In the South, long distances between rural areas and heightened class, race and economic differences led the wealthy to hire tutors for their children from abroad, and to reject efforts to provide a common schooling for poorer children. In the West, the establishment of a school was one of the first community activities to take place after settlement—an effort to replicate a civilized environment they had previously experienced in their Eastern homes.

During the Revolutionary War, the advocacy for free public schooling led to the 1785 ordinances that gave property to schools in each township. Not until the 20th century were secondary schools a common feature in the formal education of children. Enrollments were boosted during the Great Depression of the 1930s when nearly 50% of students the age 14–17 attended school (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). With the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education (1954; Brown I) ruling, schools were forced to desegregate, but resistance to the law was widespread and implementation slow.

The concept of the standardization of schooling motivated by a desire to extend equal opportunities to a wider portion of society was slow and achieved only after decades of efforts by the states to adhere to the professional wisdom of school executives and university professors who lobbied for their visions. Overall, the highly contested terrain of American education denotes a struggle at which is centered a middle-class ethos and determination to have the best interests of their children.

What is evident by today's standards is that students are not receiving the benefits of "equal opportunities" in the public education system, and schools are still very

segregated (Boger & Orfield, 2005). A neglect of the lower third quartile of the students perpetuates a system of poverty and unemployment highlighted by racism and gentrification (Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, 1989, p. 212). Fifty-seven years have passed since *Brown I* (1954); and despite increasing residential integration, schools in Atlanta, Georgia have resegregated (Kruse, 2005).

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) has served the students of the city of Atlanta proper since 1872, and was formed as a system to educate White children that would be commensurate with the opportunities offered to former slaves through the Freedman's Bureau (Loving, 1999). Operating under the paradigm of "separate but equal" in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), schools were allowed to operate a dual system for Whites and Blacks, replete with completely segregated staff. In the 1954 court decision, Brown v. Topeka Board of Education (1954; Brown I), schools were mandated to desegregate. Desegregation in the South was not immediate. In 1961, "Atlanta's school system was technically desegregated under a "freedom of choice" plan" (Kruse, 2005, p. 237) where, on paper, all parents were allowed to send students to the schools of their choice. Bureaucratic hassles enabled Whites to proceed smoothly while Blacks faced a complex web of difficulties to choose schools (Kruse, 2005).

The composition of the student population changed from White to minority in the late 1960s when mandatory desegregation loomed on the imminent horizon (Kruse, 2005). By 1969-1970, only 20% of Atlanta's 100,000 students attended a desegregated school. White flight had stripped the system of 50% of its White students from 1963 (Kruse, 2005). Ralph McGill, a newspaper columnist for the Constitution, wrote an open letter to Robert Finch, the Nixon official from the Department of Health, Education and

Welfare referring to the tragic implications of a dual school system as not a freedom of choice, but discrimination (Kruse, 2005). By 1973, Atlanta's public school system had 23% Whites enrolled. That same year, in an effort to end the desegregation lawsuit against Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta's school board and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) reached an agreement to increase student transfers, create magnet schools, increase staff integration, and hire more Blacks in administrative positions, referred to as "The Atlanta Compromise" (Kruse, 2005, p. 239). In 1985, Atlanta Public Schools' White enrollment was a meager 6%. By 2002, it was "nearly completely Black" where 93 schools of which 54 schools had one or two White students and 21 schools had zero White students (Kruse, 2005, p. 239). "The massive drop in White enrollment was due not simply to the larger migration of Whites to the suburbs, but to the fact that Whites who stayed in the city generally opted for private schools instead" (Kruse, 2005, p. 240). The dramatic change in composition of Atlanta Public Schools was rapid and has since remained a majority Black school district.

Public education is still very segregated in Atlanta. Keating (2001) argues that Atlanta has "an inferior public-school system, which is both a consequence and a cause of pervasive Black poverty" (p. 210). A neglect of the lower third quartile of the students perpetuates a system of poverty and unemployment highlighted by racism and gentrification (Weis, Farrar, & Petrie, 1989, p. 212). Fifty-seven years have passed, and despite the increasing residential integration, schools are still segregated in Atlanta, Georgia. Although schools cannot predict nor prevent the exodus of residents due to racial issues, Atlanta Public Schools exacerbated the situation through its own policies.

During the 1980s, under the Alonzo Crim superintendency, Atlanta Public Schools won awards for its district progress in standardized tests only to be exposed as fraudulent (Hess, 1999). By the late 1990s, the entire school board was ousted and a new superintendent hired (Hess, 1999). Beverly Hall served an 11-year term as Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. In 2010 - 2011, Beverly Hall and her administration were exposed for the erasure of standardized test answers in at least 58 schools and involving 200 teachers and administrators (Schwarz, 2011; Winerip, 2011). The reputation of Atlanta Public Schools reached low levels of public confidence. During the first crisis with Alonzo Crim's administration, Frederick Hess (1999) stated "Clearly, the political cost of losing a community's confidence is high," (p. 74) with regard to the value of school boards and administration and their ability to create confidence within a community. Eleven years later, Hess's (1999) commentary remains pertinent to the current crisis in Atlanta Public Schools.

During the same period (1980-2010), Atlanta experienced much neighborhood transition. The effect of gentrification on Atlanta education has had little coverage with the exception of Hankins (2004, 2005, 2007) and Martin (2008, 2007). Atlanta Public Schools (APS) serves the City of Atlanta and specifically Kirkwood and Grant Park. APS shows a declining enrollment in spite of an increasing urban population. Atlanta experienced 250,000+ new residents since 1991 and the White population has increased more than any other large city in the nation (Davis & Pickel, 2008; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003a). Atlanta is the destination of the New Great Migration for Blacks (Frey, 2004). As the city's population integrates via gentrification and anticipates the influx of

the New Great Migration, the Atlanta Public Schools system is consolidating, closing, and renovating.

Atlanta Public School's activity is based on the projected number of students for the next 5 years, with a proposed twenty percent decrease in student population by 2016, approximately 10,000 students (Atlanta Public School System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention, 2006), leaving only 86 of the 97 schools that were open in 2000 (Reid, 2003). According to Reid (2003) and Egan (2005), Atlanta has a high pupil attrition rate in the city's public school system. The enrollment in Atlanta Public Schools dropped from 60,000 students in 1995 to 51,300 in 2003 (Reid, 2003; Atlanta Public Schools, 2004). In the economically more well-to-do areas of APS, the system is able to attract only 50% of the children zoned for those schools (Atlanta Public School System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention, 2006). Parents choose to send their children elsewhere, including private schools. In 2007, APS reorganized schools, attendance boundaries and magnet programs to attract parents to the neighborhood schools. The results of such district changes will not be realized in the school system until at least 2012-2013, based on the Fall 2012 kindergarten birth cohort enrollment.

Atlanta Public Schools loses 25% of its birth cohort before the children enter kindergarten (Atlanta Public School System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention, 2006). Butler (2003) identified 25% to be a peak percent of middle-class gentrifiers who reside in a typical gentrifying neighborhood before its dominant culture becomes middle-class and it loses its transitional nature. This number has the potential to maximize at 25% of the population in any neighborhood according to Butler's London research results (Butler, 1997). It appears that once gentrifiers reach more than 25% occupancy in a

neighborhood, it saturates with the middle class as the dominant culture and it is no longer a gentrifying neighborhood, but rather a gentrified one as demonstrated by building infrastructure and consumer services in the immediate surroundings (Warde, 1991). Atlanta Public Schools loses 25% of its student birth cohort to alternative options such as private schools (Atlanta Public School System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention, 2006). Parent-gentrifiers could represent a significant portion of this population who are opting out of Atlanta Public Schools.

Due to declining enrollment, former Atlanta Public Schools superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall invited a group of parents, teachers, principals, business leaders, community leaders and School Board members to participate in the 2003-2004 North Corridor Task Force to improve recruitment and retention in the North Corridor Feeder System. She acknowledged a continuous reduction in student population "starting around grades 4 and 5, with an increasing number of families choosing alternate education options through middle and high school" (Atlanta Public Schools System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention, 2004, p. 4). This message was reiterated in *Buckhead Living* (2007) as marketing for the back-to-the-public-school or neighborhood school movement.

Previously, parents pulled their children out of the school because they witnessed a decline in the environment and test scores. Emmett Johnson, the school board president, conceded "that low test scores may have prompted parents to pull their children out of the city schools in the past," (Reid, 2003, p. 1). The rebranding of the school involved the creation of "institutional distance from rest of the school district, altering the district's administrative structure to demarcate a particular group of schools as unique" as well as creating symbolic distance from the rest of the school district "to

recognize downtown schools as such, which necessitated some form of visual continuity from school to school" (Cucchiara, 2008, p. 169). Further,

> Branding as a marketing strategy deliberately creates connections, operating on emotional and subconscious levels, between the goods being marketed and broader conceptions of lifestyle and identity (Greenberg 2000). In this case, the branding of the Center City schools was an effort to reshape the ways customers (e.g. parents) understood the schools and the images they associated with them, exchanging the schools' association with the 'inner city' for an identity tied to their location in the affluent downtown area. (Cucchiara, 2008, p. 169)

The school district acknowledged the problem of declining enrollment by regrouping and re-branding its programs, resulting in the eradication of magnet schools and creation of early college campuses to overcome a decline in student enrollment and falling patterns of consumption.

In a comparable strategy, APS began restructuring its schools in 2004, yielding a state-of-the-art campus at Carver High School. Washington High School, completely renovated in 2004 -2005, was similarly reorganized in 2009-2010. The school board reconfigured attendance zone boundaries and magnet designations as well. These reformations replicate the Center City Schools Initiative of Philadelphia [CCSI]. In the CCSI plan, school attendance boundaries changed, schools were repositioned in the market or "re-branded" to appeal to the gentrifying families in the Center City downtown area and consumer services replaced the historical bureaucracy of the school district (Cucchiara, 2008). Focusing on the upper-class consumption practices, the intent of the initiative is to reshape the image of the schools as unique and attractive (Cucchiara, 2008). The strategy yields a new space ready for place-making and attachment.

Schools now market to attract customers. Atlanta Public Schools is in the same position since school enrollment has declined, but the gentrifying residential population is

growing. Utilizing their forms of capital and agency, middle-class parents/parent-gentrifiers are able to demand good neighborhood schools, a demand that was previously ignored in such neighborhoods. As more families begin to look at gentrifying neighborhoods, Atlanta Public Schools will want to ensure a competitive image as a form of neoliberal branding and competition with respect to private school alternatives.

While much has been written on the parameters of gentrification and school choice, the research lacks the voice of parent-gentrifiers, and specifically, their school selection process and the outcomes of that process. Gentrification is a form of residential integration, and in the South, residential integration and school segregation are both increasing (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Reardon & Yun, 2005). A careful analysis of gentrifying parents and school choice may unearth answers. My dissertation research is designed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of school selection in Atlanta's gentrifying/transitional neighborhoods. Their tales will create a snapshot of the parent-gentrifiers' endeavor to educate their children in the city. The results will provide insightful information to school district leaders, educational policy makers, and urban planners to gain understanding of the school choice process in gentrifying neighborhoods.

In order to summarize the school choice options, I present a list of the elementary schools that are formally available within both gentrifying neighborhoods, Kirkwood and Grant Park, during the 2010-2011 school year. Other schools may appear in the data analysis in the event that parents send children out of the neighborhood and close to their place of employment, other relatives, or to a private school. The Atlanta Board of Education Official determines official school attendance zones. The official zone boundary for all elementary, middle and high school is based on the residence of their

parents or legal guardians based on the annual completion of an affidavit and verification in the form of a deed, mortgage statement, or lease, and an electric utility bill, with all exceptions requiring administrative approval. (Atlanta Public Schools, n.d.). The following two maps demonstrate the specific boundaries/attendance zones of the neighborhoods' traditional public schools, Parkside Elementary and Toomer Elementary.

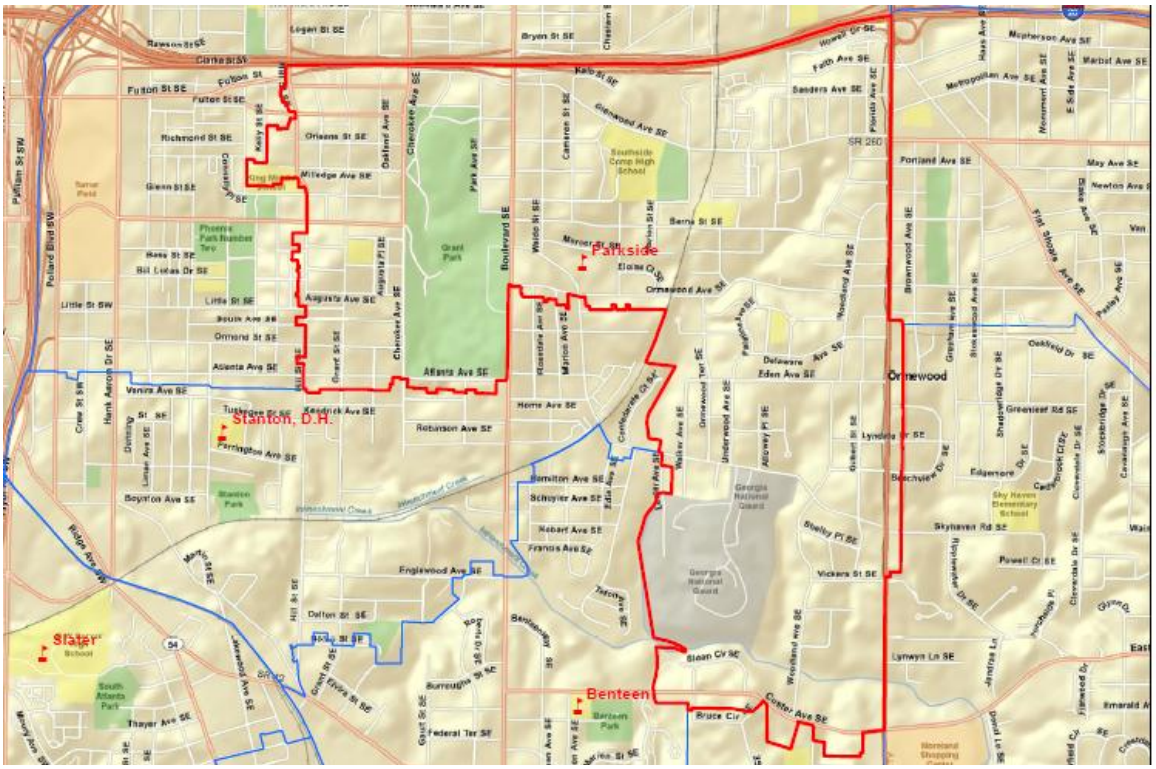

Figure 6. 2010-2011 Parkside Zoned Boundaries.
Source: Atlanta Public Schools, (n.d.), http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/Page/832

The map of Parkside (Figure 6) demonstrates how the zoned attendance area fractures the community surrounding the park, and includes D.H. Stanton Elementary and Benteen Elementary. Therefore, when the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter is also considered,

participants may be zoned in one of four different public schools within the 2.090 mile neighborhood.

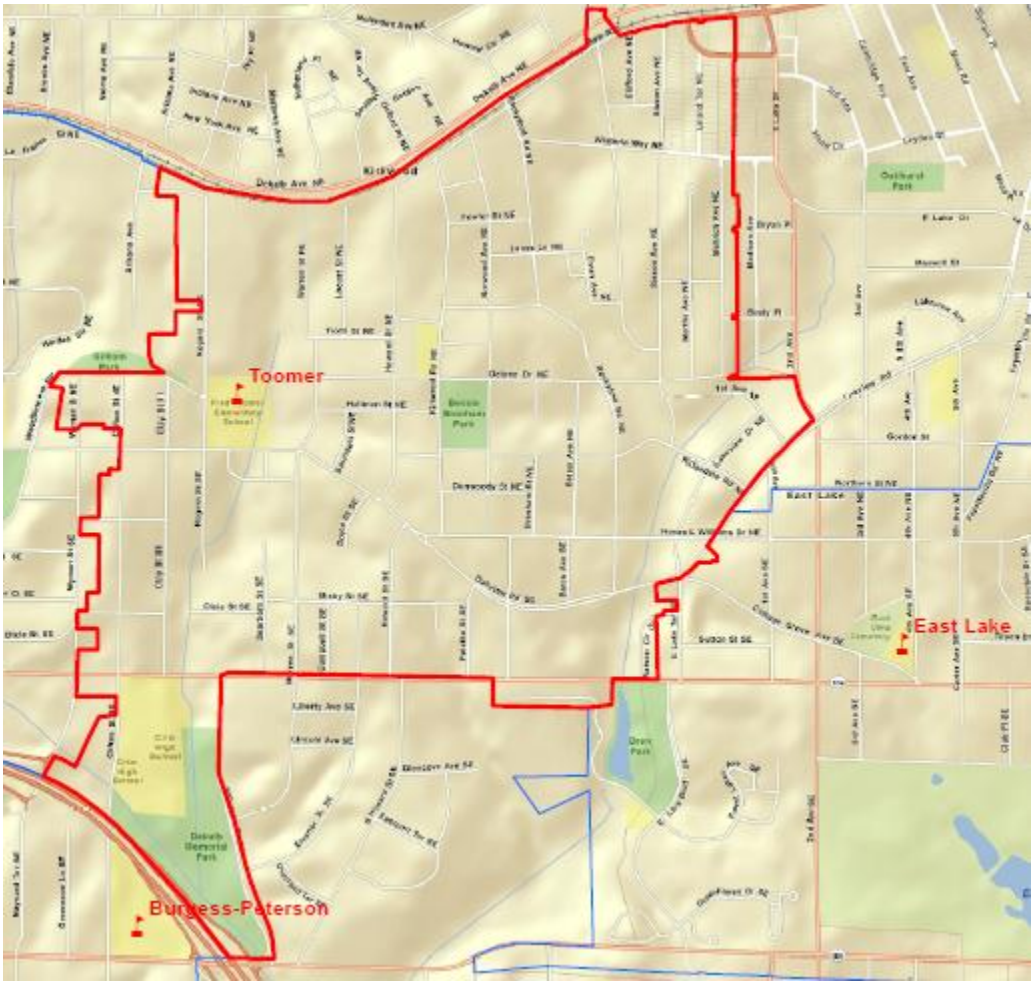

Figure 7. 2010-2011 Toomer Zoned Boundaries.
Source: Atlanta Public Schools, (n.d.), http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/Page/832

The boundary map of Toomer's zoned attendance area demonstrates the exclusion of a portion of the neighborhood from Watson Circle and up Oakview Road, excluding the neighborhood around Sutton Place (Figure 7).

Table 1

Elementary School Choice Options by Gentrification Zone

School	Kirkwood Eligibility	Grant Park Eligibility	Type of School	2009-2010 Demographics (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.)
Toomer Elementary (170 students)	X		Public	K-5, 80% Economically Disadvantaged 85% African American, 12% White, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian
Parkside Elementary (503 students)		X	Public	K-5, 78% Economically Disadvantaged 81% Black, 9% Hispanic, 6% White, 1% Asian
Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (348)	X	X	Public Charter	K-5, 18% Economically Disadvantaged 63% White, 24% African American, 3% Hispanic, 9% Other
Charles Drew Charter School (780 students)	X	X	Public Charter	K-5, 78% Economically Disadvantaged 94% African American 1% Hispanic, 2% White , 3% Other
Wesley International (589 students)	X	X	Public Charter	K-8, 47% Economically Disadvantaged 76% African American, 12 % White, 4% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 6% Other
The Children's School	X	X	Private	PK-6, No Ec. Disadvantaged 56% White, 41% African American, 2% Asian *
Paideia School	X	X	Private	PK-12, No Ec. Disadvantaged 72% White 15% African American 7% Asian, 5% Hispanic *
Waldorf School of Atlanta	X	X	Private	PK-8, No Ec. Disadvantaged 83% White, 12% African American, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian *

*Information obtained from greatschools.org (n.d.)

Economically disadvantaged students are students in schools determined to be eligible to participate in the Free Lunch Program under the National School Lunch Act (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). The schools listed in Table 1 represent school options available within the neighborhood boundaries of Grant Park and Kirkwood. The information reflects the schools within a 5-mile radius, which I later modified to reflect the schools mentioned in participant responses.

Individual Interests and Social Responsibility

As a part of my research, I explore the concept of diversity, with regard to social justice defined as the equitable treatment of human beings in terms of opportunity and outcome. Social justice or social welfare was integrated in Keynesian economic policies as a large-scale social responsibility from the 1950s through the 1990s. As Rose (1996) speaks to the "death of the social," he refers to the loss of imposed governance and a change to self-governance. In this research, social justice is identified with racially integrated education, a fight the U.S. government pursued from 1954 to 1991.

The abandonment of the fight for integrated schools came with three Supreme Court cases that set the precedent for district courts across the United States: the *Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell* (1991), *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) and *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995). Since these court decisions, social justice has proved to be an issue that does not benefit from self-governance in a neoliberal educational market. Resegregation has increased in schools since 1990 (Boger & Orfield, 2005). In fact, with regard to school populations, "some of the most rapid losses of Whites occurred in such cities as Atlanta where bussing had never been pursued," (Boger & Orfield, 2009, p. 9).

Boger and Orfield (2005) argue these losses do not correspond to sudden demographic change.

The governmental oversight of desegregation was dismantled or deregulated during the 1990s with the belief that segregation was no longer a condition inspired by force and intimidation, but by choice. The choice of where one lived determined the racial and socio-economic complexion of the school population. As Whites had fled the urban areas in the 1950s, middle-class Blacks moved to 'better schools' in the 1980s and 1990s. School choice followed through vouchers and charter schools. The caveat is that choice is based on excellence and accountability without regard for the public good and general social well-being, also known as equity (Oria, Cardini, Ball, Stamou, Kolokitha, Vertigan, & Flores-Moreno, 2007). In education, "school choice has become a highly individualistic activity where the space for social concerns is minimal" (Oria et al., 2007, p. 102). Reay, Crozier, and James (2011) argue that the neoliberal emphasis on individualism has shifted the responsibility for social justice into an individual responsibility.

> For present purposes, the central point is that neoliberal policies around school choice have re-shaped earlier discourses of equity, inclusion and social welfare, changing the meaning of the terms themselves. Although the rhetoric of choice appears politically neutral, its introduction discursively shifts the responsibility for social inequality to individual citizens (p. 65).

I contend that parent-gentrifiers are situated in a particular place with respect to their school selection process with respect to this shift in responsibility. I explore how parent-gentrifiers choose schools in urban areas that have been historically segregated and how they frame those decisions.

As parents select schools, their choices are wrought with dilemmas of the personal versus the social. Oria, et al. (2007) examined the ethical conflict involved in choosing schools, finding that there is the "pursuit of familial advantage through education" where "parents act as citizen-consumers in choosing schools" (Oria et al., 2007, p. 92). The combination of social responsibility and personal responsibility result in the good parent/bad citizen versus the bad parent/good citizen conundrum (Ball, 2006; Nagel, 1991; See also White, 1994). Nagel's (1991) "division of self" is where the ideas and discourse of good parents and good citizens run contrary to one another.

The same conflict is found between John Locke's liberalism and John Dewey's progressivism where the choices are based on liberalism's reduced state that encourages "cultural diversity" or progressivism's focus on "democracy, equality, and autonomy" (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002, p. 13). Parents in a neoliberal market have the right to foster choices based on their own cultural habitus, making personal choices, but they have an impact in numbers. The duality conflict is included as a part of the school-selection process for parent-gentrifiers because it may appear during the data analysis if racial or socio-economic diversity issues emerge from the data.

Residential Integration and School Resegregation

Residential integration is recent a phenomenon as well as school resegregation. School segregation is not. In order to understand the evolution of segregation, I review the legal history of segregation. The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution was adopted in 1868, and it specifies that no state shall deny equal protection of the law to any person within its jurisdiction. The state may not create laws

that violate fundamental constitutional rights, either. The amendment could thus be applied to the case of segregation in that compulsory school attendance laws confer a property right to students. Therefore, no state shall take away the right to attend school from any student. The Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that "separate but equal" was constitutional. In 1954, the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954; Brown I) decision stated that separate schools were "inherently unequal". Subsequently, segregation was legally defined into two categories.

De jure segregation is that which is mandated by or a result of the law, while *de facto* segregation occurs despite or as an unintentional result of the law (McCarthy, Cambron-McCabe &Thomas, 1998). As new cases appeared, the line of distinction between the two forms faded rapidly. For instance, *Spencer v. Kugler* (1972) clarifies

> The point we are making is that the current situation we face, in which most minority group children attend school in isolation from children of the majority group, is not accidental or purely de facto. In many cases, it has resulted in whole or in substantial part from an accumulation of governmental actions. Thus, the categorical distinction between de jure and de facto segregation is not as clear-cut as it would appear. Upon closer examination, there is probably little legal substance to the concept of de facto school segregation. (¶ 16)

De facto segregation originates from *de jure* desegregation. "Since most racial imbalance, once established, is foreseeable, any policy which permits such imbalance to continue would, on a strictly objective theory, amount to de jure segregation" (*George Arthur v. Ewald Nyquist*, 1978). The more strategies applied to solve the issue of segregation, the more complex the issue became. *De facto* segregation was successfully argued and established as a by-product of residential patterns as seen in *Deal v. Cincinnati Board of Education* (1966) which stated that the school board did not have to take steps to racially balance *de facto* segregated schools,

> If factors outside the schools operate to deprive some children of some of the existing choices, the school board is certainly not responsible therefore.[24] …In this situation, while a particular child may be attending a school composed exclusively of Negro pupils, he and his parents know that he has the choice of attending a mixed school if they so desire, and they can move into the neighborhood district of such school. (¶)

The court decision in *Deal v. Cincinnati Board of Education* (1966) disregards the social and economic history of residential choice and neighborhood schools.

The neighborhood school has long been considered the best way to reach the largest number of children. However, many urban neighborhoods changed after the court ruled in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954. The resulting residential patterns were single race because White flight isolated the neighborhood school system, whether due to *Brown* (I) or the myriad of governmental policies (Chemerinsky, 2005). Examples of such residential patterning were labeled '*de facto* segregation' and established in *Deal v Cincinnati Board of Education*, (1966). The court affirmed that *de facto* segregation was not the issue in *Brown* because *Deal* involved residential choice. Although the combination of poverty and racial segregation has a strong, negative impact on the quality of education, efforts to integrate housing and remove *de facto* patterns have been met with resistance (Mioli & O'Neill, 2000). In the case of *Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Corp* (1977), a neighborhood's power prevented integration. The reverse trends to integrate thirty-one years later may still not rectify school segregation.

While urban areas experienced White flight from 1954 to 1990, school districts efforts to integrate schools included bussing, magnet programs, and the like under court ordered desegregation mandates. In the 1990s, a surge of

decisions granted ‘unitary status’ to school districts in the United States (Boger & Orfield, 2005). Unitary status occurs when desegregation efforts are no longer mandated because the school district has reached what the court considers its maximum ability to integrate the student population (Chemerinsky, 2005, p. 38). Three Supreme Court cases set the precedent for district courts across the United States: the *Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell* (1991), *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) and *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995). Essentially, these three Supreme Court decisions stated that unitary status was granted to a school district if they had followed a court order to a practical extent in good faith. When portions of those orders are met, they cease to be enforced.

By the 1990s, the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* was fulfilled legally in most instances. In fact, race conscious school assignment policies are now legal only if they are court-ordered. Then, school resegregation occurred and increased from 1990-2000 (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Chemerinsky, 2005). As of 2000, school districts were rapidly resegregating in the South and elsewhere due to the lack of school-assignment plans (Boger & Orfield, 2005, pp. 10-11). The consequence of this resegregation is devastating to the surrounding communities because the schools regress to segregated institutions and enter perceived “spirals of decline” (Gorard, Taylor, & Fitz, 2002, p. 368).

Spirals of decline occur when a school does not meet or regresses in test scores, experiences a transition into a majority-minority population, or both. Whites and Hispanics use the ratio of African Americans in a school to determine

the school quality (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002; Wells, et al., 2009). By definition, White middle-class students who opt out of urban neighborhood schools or public school options in gentrifying neighborhoods contribute to school resegregation. School segregation in the themes of diversity and social responsibility are included in the discussion of the results in Chapter 4.

Summary

Gentrification and education are interdependent as parent-gentrifier experiences in the urban city (Cucchiara, 2008; Frankenberg, 2005; Robson & Butler, 2001). The real estate market and urban public education reciprocally determine each other's future in the United States. Often, housing or residential choices depend on the reputations of neighborhood schools (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Frankenberg, 2005; The Report of the Century Foundation Task Force, 2002; Wells, et al., 2009). Essentially, housing policy is school policy, because students are zoned into schools by their residential location. Urban school districts across the United States are consolidating and closing schools while these same urban areas are experiencing an increase in gentrifying populations. As a result, the consolidated schools are crowded and segregated, creating narrow education options for incoming parent-gentrifiers.

San Francisco, Seattle, Honolulu, Boston, Pittsburgh, Washington, Portland (OR), Denver, Miami, Minneapolis, Austin and Atlanta are all cities with populations of 300,000+ in the process of revitalization that are currently experiencing low percentages of public school children under 18 years of age (Egan, 2005). The influx of gentrifiers has not curtailed school closings in these areas, yet parent-gentrifiers may not have a

neighborhood school from which to choose (Egan, 2005). Because a decreasing student population characterizes the gentrification process, school systems experience smaller enrollment cohorts (Betancur, 2002; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002). Closing schools in revitalizing areas eliminates the public school options for parent-gentrifiers. An exact count of gentrifying parents and/or their children is difficult to obtain, and there is a lack of information regarding the strategies and discourse that gentrifying parents utilize to choose schools for their children.

Meanwhile, school districts are only recently beginning to market to the changing consumer preferences and behaviors. Those parent-gentrifiers who do consider public education, they confront a "division of self" in the process of school selection. Under the neoliberal agenda, "Policy works to make these parents 'self-regarding'. The responsibility to 'others' is displaced" (Oria, et al., 2007, p. 103). By definition, gentrifiers make residential choices with diversity in the foreground. I expect to gain information as to how that same diversity affects their sense of commitment to social justice in education.

My review of the literature considers the school-selection process and the networks forged to gain information regarding schools with the assumption that the schools parent-gentrifiers select for their children are influenced by their access to information and their agency in pursuing those choices. I consider Beck's (2007) concept of educational reductionism, which describes how the theory and analysis in current literature on the marketization of education has depicted middle-class efforts as intense and desperate "to secure positional advantage for its offspring by exploiting the opportunities that the new education market place provides" (p. 37). In contrast, I

approach the research as an opportunity to examine school selection as a set of differentiated, lived experiences for parent-gentrifiers rather than contributing to the essentialization of those experiences. While much of the previous literature is the basis of my research, I consciously consider the middle class, specifically parent-gentrifiers, with respect and dignity in my analysis of their efforts in the school selection process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To hear the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers and satisfy the need for qualitative inquiry expressed by previous researchers (André-Bechely, 2005a; Croft, 2003; DeSena, 2006, 2009; Robson & Butler, 2001), I used phenomenographic methodology. My methodology is fully described in this chapter, and organized to include the sampling strategies, selection of participants, research design, data analysis, and limitations. Phenomenography is the study of the lived experience of others, epistemologically-based on their relational perspective of the world. This inductive approach provided grounded, empirical research that revealed the qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon and the internal and external aspects that surround those experiences, including their temporality, context, situation, and emotion (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Phenomenography is a relatively new methodology, originating in 1980s as an interpretivist empirical research approach without a theoretical or philosophical framework (Akerlind, 2005a). Based on a constructivist epistemology that believes our knowledge is constructed and shaped by human perceptions, experiences and social interactions (Akerlind, 2005a; See also Marton & Booth, 1997 for more on constructivist epistemology), phenomenography has two core assumptions. First, the ontological assumption is that an individual's experience of a phenomenon is affected by time and context (Akerlind, 2005a, 2005b; Booth, 2008; Marton & Booth, 1997). At any other

time, place, or context, their experience may differ from that which they have described in this study. Second, there are a finite number of ways of experiencing the derived categories of description (Booth, 2008; Marton, 1981; Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Pong, 2005). In this case, a sample set at any point in time and geographical/spatial contexts should approximate the range of finite possibilities of the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process.

Phenomenographic research focuses on the variation of the perspectives of the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon (Bowden & Green, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997). The experiences are analyzed at the group level, as opposed to the individual level. Therefore, the factors of time, space and context that may affect an individual's perspective on an experience are represented in the collective variation of response. Although an individual's experience of a phenomenon is contextually and temporally specific, the collective experience represents the potential variation of that experience with regard to time, space and context (Akerlind, 2005b; Bowden & Green, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997). With this approach in mind, one is able to conduct interviews that, regardless of time, space and context, provide a sample point on the assumed finite number of experiences possible for the phenomenon (Booth, 2008; Marton, 1981; Marton & Pong, 2005). Akerlind (2005a) finds that "Ideally, the outcomes represent the full range of possible ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question, at this particular point in time, for the population represented by the sample group collectively" (p. 323).

Akerlind (2005a) limits the manageability of phenomenographic studies to 20 participants, whereas Bowden (2005) finds 20-30 participants ensure sufficient variation

in perspective, yet maintain data manageability. Although the individual experience may vary over time and reflection, a group range of 30 provides an outcome space that approximates the finite range of possible experiences, although Akerlind (2005a) notes that "any outcome space is inevitably partial, with respect to the hypothetically complete range of ways of experiencing a phenomenon" (p. 328).

I chose phenomenography due to my close relationship with this research topic. A phenomenographic approach requires the researcher to disclose and bracket their relationship to the phenomenon. By acknowledging the researcher's potential bias in perspective, the research can be focused on the relationship between the participants and the phenomenon. Researchers must bracket first order statements about the world or second order statements about the potential of living the experience vicariously.

In this case, I disclosed my status as a former resident, teacher and parent in a gentrifying neighborhood in the early stages of transition. I lived in a gentrifying neighborhood for four years, and taught in that neighborhood public school system for six years. Four months after the birth of my first child, I moved. Such discussion of my experience and beliefs is common in the realm of qualitative research because it serves to provide the reader with a perspective on my lens of personal experience. Exposing and bracketing my personal experience allowed the research results to be understood in light of my perspective. Even though every effort is made to bracket that perspective, script the interviews and follow methodological protocol, I acknowledged and critically examined the role of my own previous experience as a potential variable in my research.

Further efforts to reduce bias were integrated in the research design of the interview process. A scripted series of interview questions and prompts were used to

provide rigor, reliability and to reduce potential research bias in the interview process (Barnacle, 2005; Bowden & Green, 2005). Phenomenography's strength comes from a strict adherence to the scripted interview questions, removing the potential tangle of relationships between researcher and phenomenon and participants (Barnacle, 2005; Green, 2005). Scripted interviews reduce the potential for leading questions or steering interviews. Because variation is the focus of the analysis, every effort was made to eliminate variation in the research protocol, so that true variation could arise from the data.

Any commonalities found in the research data occurred in spite of the variation, yielding a consistent level of discernment and awareness that generates the initial categories of description. The categories of description were created to minimize the potential bias in categorizing data and data analysis. Through the maximized variation of the sample group, the outcome space should represent the full range of possible ways to experience the phenomenon at this point of time for the population collectively represented by the sample group (Booth & Marton, 1997; Marton & Pong, 2005). Marton referred to this as the "horizontal décolage" where the variation within individuals across structurally similar tasks (1981, p. 192). My research analyzed the variation in the experiences and reflections of parent-gentrifiers as they chose schools and operated in social networks and enclaves in the different geographical and social spaces of Atlanta's Kirkwood and Grant Park neighborhoods.

The categories of description derived from the data represent the range of responses from the group as a whole. The collective experience gives much more strength than analysis at the individual level (Marton & Booth, 1997). The iterative

process of data analysis yielded grounded, empirical data. My study was a small, qualitative analysis that provided an opportunity to see empirical, grounded research emerge in a cross-section sample of 30 participants, which was a group of sufficient size to find variation, yet small enough to manage the data collection and analysis (Bowden & Green, 2005). The resulting data should represent the range of possible outcomes in a population similar to the sample group of parent-gentrifiers in Kirkwood and Grant Park with children between the ages of 0 and 5.

Sampling Strategy

My research objective was to learn about the experience of a social phenomenon without making generalizations to the general population, so purposeful; snowball sampling was preferred and practiced over random sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Snowball sampling is a sampling method where participants are contacted based on social networks or referrals (Ball, 2003; Brantlinger, 2003; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Holme, 2002; Oria, et al., 2007; Reay, 1998a; Vincent, 2001). Snowball sampling was significant to this research methodology because it mirrors the social contacts and referrals that occur in parents' natural flow of social networking. Maximized variation sampling used in phenomenography includes extreme cases on either end of a spectrum (Green, 2005). Age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social and economic status, and physical disability are examples of factors considered in maximizing the participant pool in purposive sampling (Maxwell, 1996).

Again, the commonalities derived from great variations in sample populations are of specific interest and value to the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The combination of

snowball sampling and maximized variation provided the opportunity to hear distinct experiences in this study. My study included multiple variations in terms of race, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and marital status. The spectrum of the sample group included socioeconomic variation, African Americans, Asian Americans (including India), physically-challenged, lesbian families, married parents, divorced/single parents, widowed parents, interracial marriages and families with adopted children.

Selection of Participants

The sampling group included 30 mothers (n = 30), 16 from Kirkwood and 14 from Grant Park. The participants were not randomly chosen, because they were selected from a narrow pool of eligible candidates that snowballed through social networks/contacts (Brantlinger, 2003; Holme, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Vincent, 2001). Via snowball sampling, 15 participants were selected. Another 15 participants agreed to conduct interviews from my personal solicitation at the community park.

The research participants resided in a home in one of two gentrifying neighborhoods under investigation (similar selection strategy to Butler, 1997; DeSena, 2006; Karsten, 2003). Participants had children under the age of 5 and some were in the initial stages of the school-selection process, a similar participant group as those utilized by DeSena (2006, 2009) and Karsten (2003). Participants were assigned pseudonyms immediately after being interviewed. Every reasonable effort to protect the identity of the subjects was made, including changing the names of participants and any further identifying information. The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

approved my research December 17, 2009, and the IRB renewed approval December 16, 2010.

The resulting sample group did not yield males. Participants were solicited and the responses were all female. Three males initially agreed to participate. One did not return follow-up phone calls or e-mails, one had children in the middle school so he did not meet the screening criteria, and one had his wife participate in the interview process. Though I tried to balance the voice by gender, it was ultimately unsuccessful, and mothers participated exclusively.

The proceeding table includes descriptive information regarding each participant, their neighborhood, how many years they have lived in the neighborhood, how many children they had upon moving to the neighborhood and how many children they had when they participated in the research interviews, their motives for moving into the neighborhood, and their school choice (See Table 2).

Table 2

Participants

Fictional Name	Years in Neighborhood	Number of children at move/ Present Number of Children	Motive for move into neighborhood	Neighborhood	School Choice (Preference or Actual)
Azalea	11	0/2	In-town, affordable, neighborhood, diversity, tight network	GP	Charter
Delilah	15	0/2	Relocated, diverse and progressive neighborhood, historic home with potential for renovation, 2nd home purchased in neighborhood	GP	Charter
Florence	2	1/2	*Relocated, warmer climate, urban, park proximity	GP	Charter
Iris	10.5	0/2	Luck, commute, used a map to locate a good compromise, amenities of park, etc.	GP	Charter
Rosie	16	0/2	Return to hometown, liberal neighborhood, diverse in race and SES, neighborhood activism and renovation, commute, shuffled to 2nd home purchased in neighborhood**.	GP	Charter
Ruby	6.5	0/1	*Relocated with one week to find home, job, word of mouth, explored by themselves, close to park, distance to downtown	GP	Charter
Ann	2	0/1	Proximity to work, commute, friend's rental	GP	Charter or move
Ramona	3	0/2	Cute, cheap, diverse neighborhood	GP	Charter or public

Linda	7	0/1	House, area, proximity to park, sense of community	GP	Charter or public ($)
Heidi	2	1/1	Space, diversity in race and SES, affordability, sense of community, walking	GP	Charter/ Private
Ava	10	0/2	Affordable home	GP	Private
Juliana	3	0/2	Nostalgic recreation of own childhood neighborhood, old houses, parks, trees, etc., across from school, diversity	GP	Public
Mary	5	0/1	Original house for proximity to work, urban, affordability	GP	Undecided
Elaine	7	0/1	Right house, scoped out neighborhood for a long time	GP	Undecided ($)
Eliza	7	1/3	Shorter commute, proximity to park, high school, cheaper property taxes	K	Charter/ private
Mary Jane	5.5	0/2	One particular street, in-town, affordability, commute	K	Home-school or public
Cecilia	8	0/2	Real estate agent, neighborhood, house	K	Private
Deb	3	0/1	Commute from suburbs, affordability in-town	K	Private
Giselle	2	2/2	Lived in adjacent neighborhood, friends, eye on house for long time = house	K	Private
Joselyn	4	2/2	*Relocated, space, questionable area, great size, new house, NOT looking at school (had children)	K	Private & Public One in each
Isabel	8	2/2	Moved from one in-town to neighborhood due to affordability and more diversity, political and personal reasons	K	Private & Public (due to $)
Roxanne	8	0/2	In-town neighborhood, house itself, moved from one in-town neighborhood in area to this one	K	Private or move
Bernadette	12	0/2	Very cheap home, potential investment	K	Private, switched to Public
Lisa	7	0/3	In-town neighborhood, participate/ create community	K	Public

Nanette	11	0/2	In-town, commute, affordability, sense of community, shuffled to 2nd home purchased in neighborhood**	K	Public
Patrice	5	0/2	Relocated, affordable urban neighborhood, close to job	K	Public
Rosalyn	1	2/2	*Relocated, proximity to sister, school, family and friends	K	Public
Jackie	4	0/2	In-town, affordability	K	Public or charter
Jolene	8	0/1	Affordability mainly. In-town living, older homes, feel of community	K	Public or Homeschool (wants private, but $)
Nora	4	0/1	In-town, neighborhood, house, walking	K	Undecided

**Relocated = from out of state*
**Shuffled = moved from one home in neighborhood to another
$ Finances limit choice per participant response

I began the data analysis with Table 2 to introduce participants and a description of why they chose to move to their respective neighborhoods, summarizing the variation among participants (Table 2). Certain variations in the data such as age, race, sexual orientation, etc. are not included in order to protect identities and avoid bias in the interpretation of the responses. All proper names are pseudonyms and I changed other identifying information in order to preserve anonymity. Likewise, lengthy descriptions of each participant were condensed into a table format that offered enough information to gain perspective without divulging identifying comments or characteristics. Table 2 was then sorted, first by neighborhood and, second, by school choice. Data analysis began only after all interviews were completed and transcribed. The volunteer participants of the sample group were all, by chance, female between the ages of 30 and 45 with an

average of 1.72 children. Their average length of residence was 6.75 years in their current home. The racial diversity of the participants included 2 African Americans, 2 Indo-Asians, and 26 Caucasians.

Research Design

In order to ensure a valid protocol, I tested all interview questions through five pilot interviews that were conducted in February 2010, in Boston, Massachusetts and New York, New York. The pilot interviews helped finalize the formal interview inputs and to gain researcher confidence and comfort prior to formal interviews. The interview questions were modified to elicit explicit responses from participants. The scripted questions and prompts are included in the Appendix. The interviews and digital recordings contained information focused on the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon. Participants met in a mutually agreeable location—either a public space or, primarily, the participants' homes. I met with participants in both neighborhood parks, and I attended playgroup at the default location of playgroup on rainy days, the local bounce house.

Interviews were recorded with an iPod with 160 GB of memory, a digital microphone, a laptop, and a cassette tape back-up. Over a period of six months, I transcribed and edited all interviews utilizing Dragon Naturally Speaking. I subsequently generated the empirical data from those interviews and conducted the data analysis on a laptop computer that was fire-walled and password-protected. A locking file cabinet was maintained to keep all interviews and transcriptions under confidentiality. The research design procedures to establish coder reliability are depicted in detail in the data analysis

section. Likewise, the interpretivist steps, highlighted with examples in the data analysis section, fully illustrate my role as an individual researcher in the phenomenographic process.

Data Analysis

Following the Booth's (2008) data analysis protocol, I did not commence whole transcript review until all interviews were completed. I selected quotations of interest from the text that formed a pool of meanings. Said quotations were the words of the participants in the general context–without further interpretation. In the next step, quotations in individual and collective contexts were grouped by similarities to generate a rough draft of the outcome space, also referred to as the categories of description. Each time I began a new phase, I revisited the goal of phenomenographic analysis where "The aim is to find not the singular essence, but the variation and the architecture of that variation" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117). I thoroughly read and reviewed the literature on phenomenography six times during the data analysis phase to insure the integrity of the product and maintain focus on the variation in the data.

My review of the transcripts commenced with the repetition of every word spoken while I transcribed them using Dragon Naturally Speaking software. The transcripts were then reviewed a plethora of times as whole transcripts and in part prior to creating the preliminary set of the category of descriptions. I grouped interview excerpts by similarity from which the categories of description were subsequently constructed. The process is strongly iterative and comparative. The data were examined several times followed by a subsequent revision of the categories of description with each reading. The

rationale for this process is that the focal awareness of the researcher is constantly alert to different stimuli each time, creating a layered awareness.

The ability to see things differently with each reading provides an opportunity to see what maybe was not seen before, or to see that something previously observed was an illusion (Akerlind, 2005a; Booth, 2008; Marton & Booth, 1997). Those parts or aspects, which are discerned and appear in people's awareness provide a certain aspect or dimension of variation in the responses (Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Pong, 2005). What people are aware of in the experience is what they will talk about in the interview. The interview yields an overlap of focal awareness between the researcher and the participant. Likewise, my focal awareness varied with each reading of the data, leading to the recalculation of approaches in the analysis and constant revision.

Two types of data emerge in phenomenographic research. Surface or first order information (interpersonal) describes various aspects of the world whereas the second order (deep response data/meta-awareness) describes people's experience of various aspects of the world based on their awareness and reflections (Marton, 1981). The categories of description emerge from the second order perspective and responses (Marton & Booth, 1997). They are methodologically grounded in that they are distinct from each other; they are frequently hierarchical in structure; and they are the indispensable number of categories required to describe critical variation (Marton & Booth, 1997). The categories of description represent the commonalities in the variation of responses.

From the initial set of category descriptions, data were analyzed in a two stage analysis (Marton & Pong, 2005). The first stage was the referential stage based on the

meaning of school selection to participants. The overall meaning arose out of the interview responses, which were read several times in search of commonalities. The second stage of analysis captured the meaning of concepts by deducing participant responses (Marton & Pong, 2005). The variation in responses represents "the different aspects of the phenomenon as experienced that are simultaneously present in focal awareness" (Martin & Booth, 1997, p. 101; Martin & Pong, 2005). The primary objective of my research design was to encourage participants to reveal the ways they select schools and their ways of understanding or making sense of that experience. The categories of description provided a starting point to which I would return multiple times in the data analysis.

After developing the categories of description and the outcome space, I initiated Marton & Pong's (2005) two stage analysis, where I combed through the data to tease out the dimensions of variation, often referred to as the referential and structural aspects. Referential aspects are the overall meaning discovered, and the structural aspects of each conception/category are derived in terms of the variations of the focus of the element. The referential aspects of the themes highlight the surface or the initial responses of what is being experienced and its overall meaning. I looked for the referential aspects in the data that attached particular meaning of an individual object that was delimited and attended to by the participants (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 98; Martin & Pong, 2005, p. 336). Referential aspects are a destination point in the analysis.

In contrast, the structural aspects discern the whole from the context and the relationship of parts to the whole, which combine to form a conception of reality discerned and focused on by the participants (Marton, 1981; Marton & Pong, 2005).

Marton and Booth (1997) referred to this as the external horizon (background)–all that surrounds the phenomenon–the way it is discerned and related to context, or the "contours of the experience" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 87). The internal horizon of the structural aspect is the parts and their relationship together with the individual object, while the external horizon is the background awareness on all that surrounds the individual object of meaning (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 98). The structural aspects involve deeper, reflective participant responses, differentiating between an external horizon (background) and an internal horizon (foreground) of different elements making up the experience and how those elements are organized in one's awareness (Marton & Booth, 1997). Thus, the internal horizon yields specifics based on one's own situational constraints whereas the external horizon is the general situation common to parent-gentrifiers in the process of school selection.

Themes of awareness of the referential and structural aspects emerged in the direct and indirect object of learning, yielding four categories of description. Four categories of description were collectively derived from individual interviews in the data analysis stage. The development of the categories of description was strongly iterative. Categories were originated and revised multiple times with each review of the transcripts until they represented all variation in responses. The categories of description were validated and checked until they reached a saturated level with stabilized outcomes, from which point the structure of the outcome space was constructed. The final stage of analysis was a revision of the category of descriptions to reflect the outcome space.

In summary, the strict stimulus of phenomenographic interviews should elicit variation in participant responses. Burrowing down further in the data, one can

scrutinize the commonalities in the referential and structural aspects, including the external or internal horizons. The results of the analysis combine to form the structure of the outcome space, which is reciprocally related to the categories of description. Finally, any hierarchical relationship present in the categories of description represents stages of the participants' lived experience of a phenomenon.

Generalization Procedures

Generalizations are concepts containing the same elements applied to other situations, thus assuming they also have the same characteristics as those situations. This research is interested in the context— specifically the time and space—in which gentrifiers' school selection and parent involvement occur. Generalizations are assumed to be free of time and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because the time, space , and context of this research is part of the lived experience, only collective generalizations, based on the commonalities in categories of description, will be made. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert "naturalistic generalization" to be the best way for people to understand information—the way they would experience it—"intuitive, empirical, based on personal direct and vicarious experience" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120). This empirical research is based on personal experiences in a small, context-laden situation and is, therefore, not necessarily replicable or generalizable because the limitations of qualitative research prevent generalization from one study to another.

Validity & Reliability

Validity and reliability are components of a positivist approach. Although phenomenography is interpretivist, my study incorporates notions of both. Validity is broken down into communicative validity and pragmatic validity. The communicative validity of my research is based on a 2004 AERA paper presentation (Roberts & Gowen, 2004), and a 2011 paper presentation (Southeast Philosophy of Education Society (Roberts, 2011) where I introduced the topic to peers and members of the intended audience. In addition, I received the 2011 Dan E. Sweat Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for the topic's potential contribution to the nexus of education and urban planning. Since then, my research has been read by other members of the population sample and my dissertation committee. The pragmatic validity of this research is based on the utility and meaningfulness of the research outcomes (Akerlind, 2005a; Marton & Booth, 1997) which have yet to be recognized.

My research was conducted individually in partial fulfillment of a doctoral dissertation. Therefore, the use of coder reliability checks, a process involving two independent codings, and dialogic reliability checks involving several researchers were not conducted. Likewise, member checks were not utilized due to the nature of the pool of meanings as a collective set of interviews as it would be inappropriate for the individual participant to have access to all of the participants' interviews (Akerlind, 2005a). One form of individually checking phenomenographic research is through the strict adherence to the data (Barnacle, 2005; Green, 2005). The trustworthiness of the research lies in the focused interview design and a strict adherence to the data supported

by illustrative examples that exhibit analytical themes (Green, 2005). The data analysis and examples are included in the results in Chapter 4.

Obtaining reliability for this study is based on my full explanation of the steps and illustrative examples used in the interpretivist steps of data analysis. Akerlind (2005a, 2005b) states that a detailed explanation of the data analysis process satisfies the reliability in an individually conducted phenomenography. I maintained a detailed data analysis log for such purpose as shown in Table 3. The log includes notes on how I derived the interpretations, presuppositions, and checks and balances of my particular perspective on the research outcomes as the researcher reliability check per Akerlind (2005a, 2005b). Replicability is feasible because the steps are thoroughly outlined in detail (Table 3).

Table 3

Data Analysis Log

04/2010-08/2010	Nightly transcription and review of interviews using Dragon to maintain context and flow of speech–begin data analysis
08/2010-09/2010	Read whole transcripts nightly for 2 weeks, changed names of participants to shuffle memory and lose attachment, regain information just from the data.
10/2010-12/2010	Reading transcripts, retype transcripts and notes, look at perspectives of available school options and how history or historical recall glorifies some.
12/2010	Rewrote Chapter 3–Methodology chapter to reflect completion
12//2010–1/2011	Data analysis on-going, reread transcripts 2 more times as whole, in entirety. Took notes. Thematically separated notes to derive 8 categories–trimmed down and reunited items to create 6 categories. Printed out responses, cut and pasted similar concepts. Began experimentation with Leximancer for my own reliability concerns.
1/2011–2/2011	Composed/created flow chart and all tables for Chapter 4–Results, to help lay out the writing component.
2/7/2011	Began writing Chapter 4 Results
2/19/2011	Presentation of Chapters 3 and 4 at conference /meet with committee to review results
2/20/2011–09/01/2011	Continued analysis, writing, editing and revision

In order to further prove reliability, I utilized Leximancer 3.5 to run the data responses from all participants. Leximancer 3.5 is a software program that highlights themes and connections in the meaning/context of the written word (Penn-Edwards, 2010). In this case, I utilized the entire collection of participant responses excluding the interview questions as the data input for Leximancer because it is a text analytics tool that can analyze the content of multiple textual documents, or interviews in this case, and to

display the extracted information visually. Words that are repeated or utilized together in context are recognized as related in meaning or context.

My first example of Leximancer is a concept cloud map (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Leximancer 3.5 Concept Cloud.

The information is displayed by means of a conceptual map that provides a graphic organizer of the material, representing the main concepts and their relationships to each other within the text. In effect, Leximancer offers an objective second analysis of the reliability of my data analysis. A concept map of themes follows. The Leximancer concept cloud and the subsequent concept map, are heat-mapped, in that hot colors such as red and orange denote the most relevant concepts, and cool colors such as blue and

green, denote the least relevant concepts. Likewise, the size of the concepts denotes their frequency.

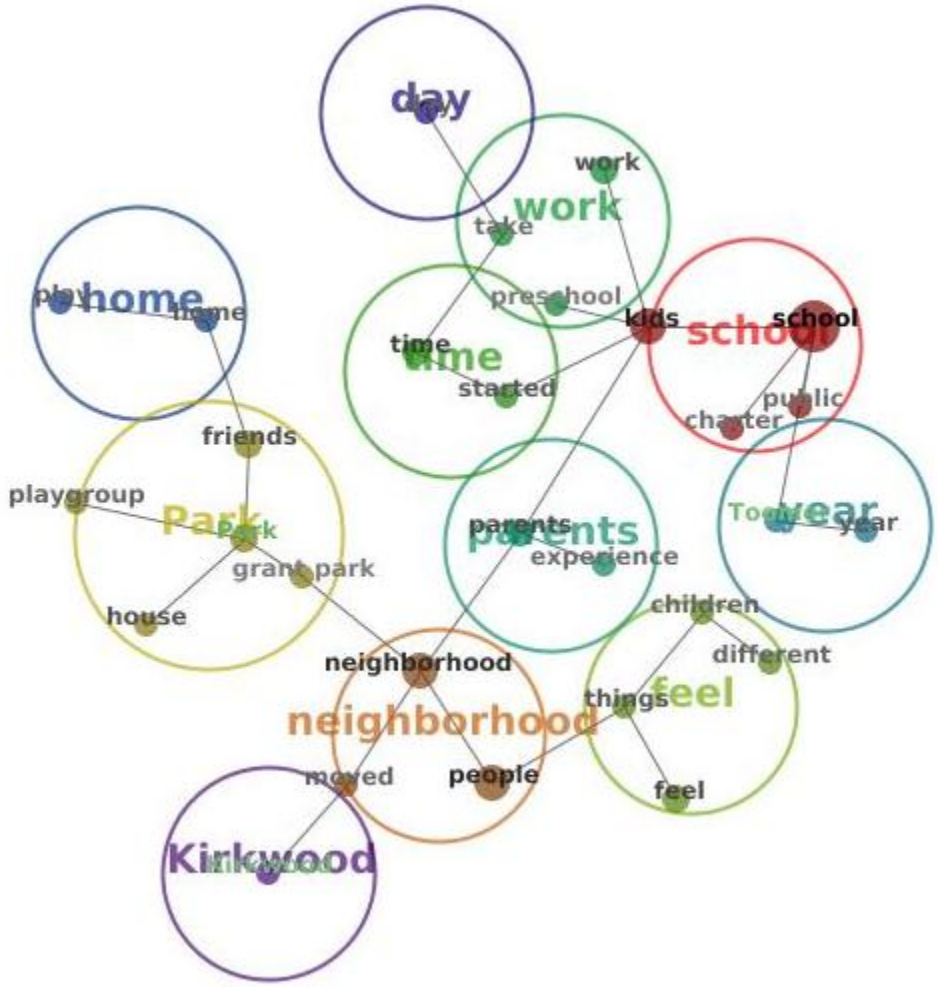

Figure 9. Leximancer 3.5 Concept Map.

The Concept Map (Figure 9) contains the names of the main concepts that occur within the text. These are the white and green words that appear on the map, representing a list of words generated and linked within Leximancer to represent the main concepts and relationships of concepts to each other. The large circles represent themes. Green

represents proper names such as people or locations, whereas White concept labels refer to other objects, locations, actions and so forth. I had the ability to add or subtract the visibility of concepts and themes. Figure 9 and Figure 10 are the same concept maps with a reduction of themes.

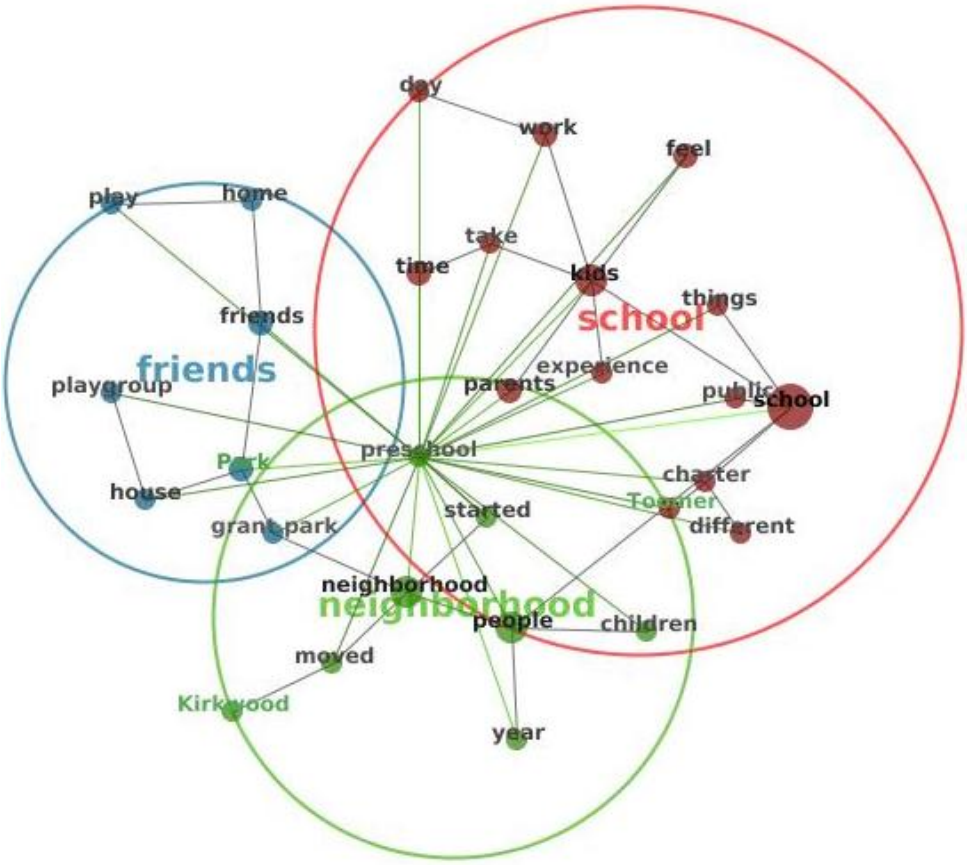

Figure 10. Leximancer 3.5 Concept Map with Reduced Themes.

As I increased the size of concept themes, the smaller concepts were enveloped under the larger themes, resulting in an ability to focus on the more salient themes emerging from the data. The larger themes emerging from the data, therefore, represent

the spaces of school, friends, and the neighborhood. One concern about using Leximancer was my novice level of manipulating the seed concepts [terms] to best use. For example, neighborhood was a main concept, but participant responses including the neighborhood were combined with responses that included the neighborhood charter school. It is interesting to note that the theme of neighborhood was related to the concept of Kirkwood, while the Grant Park concept was related to the theme of friends. Finally, it is understandable that the majority of concepts were related to preschool because 0-5 was the critical age of participants' children.

Limitations

A limitation of my research is that, as a doctoral dissertation, the data were analyzed by one individual. Akerlind (2005a) does not find this limitation to be a barrier to quality research. "A large number of individual phenomenographies exist as high-quality, substantial contributions to research" (Akerlind, 2005a, p. 328). Yet, I agree with Akerlind (2005a) that group collaboration may take my research to a synergistic level of understanding or an expanded outcome space. My research is also limited in generalizability due to its qualitative nature and sample procedures. Purposive sampling (Maxwell, 1996) may yield a homogeneous participant pool. Snowball sampling is a category of purposive sampling which "can lead to over-representation of people with similar identity characteristics" (Johnston & Swanson, 2006). I incorporated a maximum variation of participants in the selection process to counter this effect.

Due to the nature and rationale of gentrifiers' multiple school options, this research focuses on the experience of the school-selection process for gentrifying parents because it operates outside of the physical school space. School-based inquiry is absent from this research and may provide a future area of exploration. In addition, my research criteria specified that participants must have children ranging from newborn to 5 years of age. Participants had children between 0 and 5, but several also had children older than 5 for whom they had already made school choices, thus eliminating the mystique of the school selection experience. For several other participants, pre-K programs in the schools start at 4 years of age, so parents had already made some form of choice. Future research in this vein would do better to cap the oldest child at pre-K, even though many parents placed their children in the elementary school's pre-K program. Parents of children under three year of age would not necessarily have provided a perfect sample group, either, due to the time lag before actual enrollment in Kindergarten. I declare the aforementioned 'limitations' for consideration, yet the contribution of these variations in context and situation contributed to rich sources of data.

Finally, the use of self-report data can be unreliable source of data due to bias. However, phenomenography relies on self-report data and interviews as a window to the understanding of the lived experience. As a second-order perspective, it does not try to explain the phenomenon 'as it is' (a first-order perspective). Instead, all of the ways the experience is understood and expressed constitute the phenomenon. In addition, self-report data bias may affect individual data analysis, but I research the variation of response at the collective level.

Summary

Phenomenographic research allows the researcher to listen to the stories of lived experiences. The scripted interview questions create a platform for the bracketing of any outside bias to the focused collection of data. Prior to data collection, designing the interview questions and pilot testing proved to be the most significant preparations for my research because the scripted questions provided a constant to guide the research. The subsequent derivation of categories of description is a valuable, replicable tool for data analysis. Phenomenography, based on the awareness of how one experiences and perceives a phenomenon, proved to be an original and appropriate approach to understanding the parent-gentrifiers' lived experience of the school-selection process.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As stated in Chapter 2, the research reported here examined in detail the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process. The chapter is arranged in terms of the three specific research questions posed in Chapter 1, and emulates the organizational flow of the data analysis. First, the lived experiences and reflections of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process are reported. I graphically organize the "what" of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process regarding school options, forms of communication, and preferred modes of communication and work tendencies. I then follow with an analysis of the "how" of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process including their lived experiences and reflections in the social space and social networks surrounding the school-selection process. The remainder of the chapter is organized by a presentation of the categories of description.

I begin with a prose description of the categories first, although it was the final step in the data analysis, because it enriches the subsequent illustrations through flow, coherence, and meaning. A break-down of each category follows with illustrative quotations to flesh out the meaning through context. A separate section on diversity follows the categories of description because it has a place on the outcome space, but did not correspond to the hierarchical structure of the categories of description. The combination of all data results creates an anatomy of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection

process and a summative illustration of the structure of the outcome space that represents the variation in the data.

The organization of this chapter flows in much the same way that data analysis occurred. I began with the surface responses and worked into the variation of deep responses, resulting in a cumulative structure of the categories of descriptions. I commenced the analysis with the "what" (the direct object) and "how" (the indirect object) aspects of the school-selection process, synthesizing that information to form the anatomy and structure of the outcome space.

The "What" Aspect of the School-selection process

I first analyzed the direct object of school selection –"what" different ways participants select schools, in order to answer research question 1a - What options do parent-gentrifiers consider in the school-selection process? The answer constitutes the "What" aspect of the school-selection process.

Table 4

The Direct Object of Selecting Schools–What?

Experience	Structural Aspect		Referential Aspect
	External Horizon	Internal Horizon	
Public School	Choice	Knowledge of options	Location, instructional methods, teacher, zoned school reputation, interest, activation of agency
Charter School	Choice	Knowledge of options	Lottery for charter, waiting lists, hope, activation of agency
Private School	Choice	Knowledge of options	Lack of satisfaction with zoned public school system or lottery for charters, financial ability, activation of agency
Home School	Choice	Knowledge of options	Not interested in public schools, can't afford private schools or daycare/preschool programs, activation of agency
Not Yet	Choice	Knowledge of options	Children not yet school age; parents not ready to begin thinking about selection process; speculation phase of school selection, no or low activation of agency

Again, the internal horizon of the structural aspect is the foreground awareness– the parts and their relationship together with the individual object, while the external horizon is the background awareness on all that surrounds the individual object of meaning (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 98). The referential aspects in the data are the attached particular meaning of an individual object that was delimited and attended to by the participants, or the specific referential points in the responses. The structural and referential aspects of the meaning of school selection are presented (Table 4), constituting the categories of description for "what" are the school options for parent-gentrifiers. They are ordered by prevalence, but their order signifies financial ability as well, with the exception of Undecided. From the direct object of the school-selection process, five categories emerged of "what" choices are understood and experienced within the group of participants. The school options parent-gentrifiers considered were interspersed throughout the interview scripts.

In lieu of including illustrative quotations for this category, I refer to the previous table (Table 2) and the passages in the subsequent Categories of Description where the variation in responses are repeated. Five options were mentioned, representing all variation in the responses. The five options further represent all options considered in the lived experience of parent gentrifiers. Participants experiencing PUBLIC SCHOOL considered the distance and location of the school, the instructional method (with expressed opposition to direct instruction), teacher quality, and school reputation/offerings and their ability to be an agent in their child's education.

Participants in CHARTER SCHOOL were not oriented toward PUBLIC SCHOOL and hoped for a spot in a charter school as an alternative, citing objections to the aforementioned referential aspects of Public School or a limited internal horizon of the knowledge of options. PRIVATE SCHOOL was experienced as an ability to financially counter the dissatisfaction with Public School and a lack of confidence in their ability to gain a spot in a charter school. Parents sought options based on finances and location within the radius of home and work. HOMESCHOOL/UNSCHOOL was the least considered option. Participants expressed a detachment from public and charter schools, coupled with an inability to afford private schools or daycare.

HOMESCHOOL/UNSCHOOL was considered by families with flexible work schedules or stay-at-home parents that translated into higher economic or cultural capital where the trade-off of a strong financial base is time at home (Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998). UNDECIDED corresponds to the initial phases of school selection. This category of description is highlighted by a lack of knowledge or consideration of the school options available. A second direct object of my research involved focusing on research question 2a - What forms of communication do parent-gentrifiers utilize to exchange information regarding school options in their school-selection process? (Table 5).

Table 5

Forms of Communication

Experience	Structural Aspect		Referential Aspect
	External Horizon	Internal Horizon	
1. Face to Face	Preference	School(s) and choice information	Conversations at park, playground, supper club (21/30)
2. Telephone	Preference	School(s) and choice information	Telephone - interpersonal (10/30)
3. E-mail	Preference	School(s) and choice information	Email - Group or individual communication (22/30)
4. Social Networking Sites (SNS)	Preference	School(s) and choice information	Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Group communication - soccer or get-togethers (17/30)
5. Texts	Preference	School(s) and choice information	Texts - Scheduling get-togethers with friends (2/30)

Again, the lived experience represents key dimensions of variation. The referential aspects are the individual surface responses. The structural aspects are the deep responses representing reflection and focal awareness. Within the structural aspect is the external horizon (background) of the experience that is common to all participants. The internal horizon (foreground) represents the participants' situational constraints. The variations in how participants utilized forms of communication to create, coordinate and connect to their social space where school selection information is exchanged is an

original approach to parent-gentrifier research. The data demonstrated that while cellular phones and email were frequently used for coordinating social interactions and playdates, actual conversations regarding schools were reserved for face-to-face interactions. Most participants gave surface level responses, but a few were reflective in their reasons for the forms of communication they preferred such as Heidi, who mentions lack of physical freedom as a reason for technological modes of communication; Eliza, who likes to multi-task; and Delilah, who prefers being in contact with close friends "in more present ways" than Facebook. The structural aspect of the communication experience is based on an external horizon of preference and the internal horizon of the topic of conversation being about schools or school choices. The referential aspect provides the variations surrounding the experiences. I include the number of parents who cited each form in the referential aspect (Table 5).

As a secondary analysis, I explored the relationship between preferred modes of communication and work tendencies (Table 6) for patterns that might demonstrate time-compression in parent-gentrifiers' social networks.

Table 6

Preferred Modes of Communication and Work Tendencies

Name	Years in Area	Number of Children	Formal Work Status	Preferred forms of communication	Neighbor-hood
Ruby	6.5	1	Full Time flexible	All modes, mostly interpersonal at preschool space, parent network (email), FB, email for scheduling	GP
Ava	10	2	Full time	Email, FB, play dates, parent network (email)	GP
Iris	10.5	2	Full time, flexible	Email, no FB, interpersonal, playground, playgroup, formal meetings with other parents re: schools	GP
Rosie	16	2	Part time plus	FB (a lot), email, interpersonal playground/gatherings	GP
Heidi	2	1	Full time	FB, online communities, email, phone	GP
Delilah	15	2	NO	Interpersonal (dinners) and email, FB rare	GP
Juliana	3	2	Full time	Interpersonal, email, no FB	GP
Linda	7	1	Full Time Plus	Interpersonal, info through email	GP
Mary	5	1	NO	Mostly FB, new to playgroups	GP
Elaine	7	1	Full time, flexible Freelance	No email or FB, mostly phone or interpersonal	GP
Azalea	11	2	Full time	Parent network (email), email, interpersonal– phone least used	GP
Ramona	3	2	NO	Playgroup coordinator (email), interpersonal	GP

Florence	2	2	Fulltime, flexible Freelance	Playgroup, interpersonal, limited FB for scheduling	GP
Ann	2	1	NO	Text, email, FB–no phone	GP
Bernadette	12	2	Full time	FB, email, playground	K
Cecilia	8	2	Full time plus	FB, texts, phone, drop-ins (interpersonal)	K
Mary Jane	5.5	2	NO	FB, Twitter, Yahoo Groups, playground/playgroup	K
Jackie	4	2	NO	Interpersonal, email, playgroup	K
Rosalyn	1	2	NO	Interpersonal, supper clubs, FB	K
Deb	3	1	NO	Limited interpersonal; playgroup	K
Roxanne	8	2	NO	Mostly interpersonal via playgroups, email/phone.	K
Eliza	7	3	NO	Mostly phone	K
Joselyn	4	2	Full time plus	No interpersonal in school or neighborhood, lots of FB, email, family dinners	K
Lisa	7	3	NO	Online communities, FB, email, interpersonal	K
Giselle	2	2	NO	Phone, email, FB (not a lot), interpersonal @ parks,	K
Nanette	11	2	Full time flexible	Phone, interpersonal, email, no FB	K
Jolene	8	1	Full-time, flexible Freelance	Playdates, phone, FB not so much	K
Patrice	5	2	NO	Playgroup, does email thread for playgroup	K
Isabel	8	2	Full time	Variety, interpersonal	K
Nora	4	1	NO	Very spread out, mostly interpersonal contact	K

I include information regarding the participants' work schedules and neighborhood longevity (Table 6) in order to examine the potential use of technology to remain attached to a place in spite of work schedules. Participants who have lived in the neighborhood longer may experience multiple forms of communication (such as texting) that may signal frequent or close interactions. After sorting by neighborhood and preferred forms of communication, Grant Park does utilize more technologically-advanced forms of communication across the variation in responses, but residential longevity and work status do not correspond to the preferred forms of communication.

With regard to my fifth assumption that parental social networks evolve in complexity in parallel to the gentrification level of a neighborhood, Grant Park had more social networking infrastructure via the Grant Park Parent Network and the coordination of e-mails via that site. Grant Park participants also had a 64% full-time employment rate whereas 38% of Kirkwood participants were employed full-time. Kirkwood had two uncoordinated e-mail lists - the Kirkwood Babies Yahoo! group and the regular playgroup e-mail, but Kirkwood did not have a website for parents to socially network. The communication infrastructure, therefore, did demonstrate more complexity in Grant Park than Kirkwood. The source of the complexity is uncertain in my study because it may be attributed to either employment status or technological infrastructure.

In conclusion, data revealed the direct objects of the school-selection process regarding the school options available and forms of communication used to discuss those options. I now turn to the second component of the school-selection process–the act and approach or, "how" schools are selected. Based on interview responses, this phase of analysis answers research questions: How do parent-gentrifiers perform in the school-

selection process? and, How do social spaces and social networks where parent-gentrifiers exchange information regarding school options influence their school-selection process?

The "How" Aspect of the School-selection process

The "How" aspect of school selection (indirect object of experience) relates to the parent's approach. Essentially, this aspect qualifies how she understands and experiences the school-selection process. It occurs through the act of learning about and the indirect object of goals and motives in the school-selection process. Participants were asked to explain what choices they considered and how they learned about their options. They described their approach to school selection information and actions they performed that demonstrate an increasing role of agency in the skills and activities utilized to select schools for their children (Table 7).

Table 7

The Indirect Object of School Selection–How?

Experience	Structural Aspect		Referential Aspect
	External Horizon	Internal Horizon	
Agency	School-selection process	Forging a path to/of information	Initiative, individual, group, seeking a mentor, upward mentoring, priestess level of dissemination/agency and influence *how one can add value through involvement*
Social network	School-selection process	Levels and forms of communication	Core group, faders communicate via face to face (interpersonal) online groups, e-mail, telephone and Facebook which is reserved for intimate communications
Social space	School-selection process	Spaces/places to obtain /spread information	Park, (including construction), schools, meetings, playgroup in homes, playgroup in public spaces, online groups / forums, internet websites, community functions
Social responsibility	School-selection process	Weighing self versus great social good	Majority/minority status and comfort level, cultural logic and previous school experience, motives for choosing neighborhood
Education Agenda	School-selection process	Type of education	Child fit, family fit, testing scandal, instructional methods and curriculum, school day (no individualism - bathroom breaks), teacher interactions

A second set of descriptors emerged in the data that relate to the skill set participants possessed in the school-selection process. Social capital/connections, leadership and initiative, and cultural capital/logic were evidenced as common skill sets that varied in degree in participants' responses. Social capital and connections refers to the connections participants had and their possession of the strategies necessary to cultivate more connections for what knowledge they lacked about schools. Schneider, Teske, and Marschall (2002) refer to this as parents' strategic ability to transcend the constraints of their social context by increasing the quality, but not necessarily the quantity, of their peer group. In essence, the social connections they have or forge allow them to take shortcuts in building the knowledge base necessary to make an informed school choice (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2002).

Social capital, in the form of collaboration, was a skill set that emerged from certain participants to rally others in a community cause. A commonality in the variation of responses was that participants were most influenced by peers who demonstrated the other two skillsets of leadership/initiative and cultural capital/cultural logic. For example, Patrice is revered by many participants because of what she knows , her former employment in education, and her initiative to assume the role of playgroup leader and mentor, and her social connections developed from her activated agency.

Leadership and initiative were also present as a skill set among participants. I merge leadership and initiative together, because high levels of initiative transformed into leadership. Initiative is present in a continuum from the self-interest of individuals to the collaboration of community leaders. It is not to be confused with the approach of

activating agency. They are treated separately, and when intertwined, they assume a powerful role in propelling the agenda of participant responses.

A third commonality in the variation of responses was a reference to one's own knowledge base and previous personal experience with regard to the expectations they carried into the school-selection process. I refer to this skill as cultural capital and cultural logic. Cultural logic is the dominant norm followed by people of similar cultures or as Bourdieu states "people like us" (1990, p. 77). Therefore, the knowledge base and, often, educational credentials, of participants formed their cultural capital. The cultural logic of the middle class includes their previous experiences and the expectations they have for the educational trajectory of their own child.

After reviewing the transcripts using an iterative process, and combining the "what" and "how" of the school-selection process, categories of description thematically emerged from the data. In the following section, I provide substantive data to illustrate the categories of description and present the hierarchical relationship of the approaches of the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process. Social responsibility is included as a subsection because it appeared without a hierarchical relationship.

Categories of Description of Parent-Gentrifiers' School-Selection Process

The illustrative quotations in the categories of description are the substantive portion of my research because they provide depth and context to parent-gentrifiers' lived experience of selecting schools. As one progresses through the categories, the role of agency in school choice becomes more integrated into the daily life of participants until

the school-selection process is a decision attached to the daily social experience. As a whole, the variation in context, temporal and social patterns of organization, and the increased attachment of schools and school choice to other parts of life point to a potential continuum of experience in the school-selection process. Categories are arranged in a hierarchical order based on the combination of agency, social networking, social space and educational agenda. For example, participant responses expressing a low level of agency and social networking would be LONERS. A summative explanation of the categories precedes the detailed data analysis of participant responses.

Table 8

Categories of Description

LONER School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as an uncalculated reaction to school selection, but gains such in the reflection and awareness of the interview process. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is that it is unplanned–without calculation. The structural elements include a lack of comparisons between schools and school options, feeding into the zoned school, a lack of networking or seeking information regarding school options, highlighted by a lack of social network formation and information exchange to guide that experience.
FOLLOWER School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a reaction to social networks operating at a collective level of information exchange and decision-making. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is who is sending their children to what school and the way information is evaluated and prioritized. The structure of the experience consists of several elements: the quantity and quality of parents' social networks, who goes to what school, and the quantity and quality of information exchanged regarding school options. Seeking information, mentors are often sought and selected and choices followed.
SEARCHER School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a strategic endeavor on an individual level based on each child's needs and current circumstances. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is generalized as what is the best family fit and subcategorized into (1) what is best for each child and (2) what is best for parents, yielding structural aspects that range in a non-binary continuum. Social networks are used to gain a referential perspective.
COLLABORATOR School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a proactive endeavor engaged in by citizens who may or may not be parents when they begin their (parental) involvement in the school. It may be marked as an effort to increase value of schools for future offspring or as part of their investment to increase the value of market-rate real estate. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is how one can add value through involvement–creating an opportunity for the activation of agency for improvement in the school. The structural elements forming the experience include intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (i.e. social justice, social activists trying to do "the right thing".) Leadership is present in the form of initiative, mentoring and collaboration where the strategic use of social networks accomplishes the agenda.

LONER

LONER represents the least strategic form of agency and urgency. Parents may be in the early phases of parenthood where their children are young, and school seems like a distant issue. On the other hand, some parents did most of their school selection in a socially-insulated environment. They were not discussing school. School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as an uncalculated reaction, but gains such in the reflection and awareness portion of the interview process. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is that it is unplanned–without calculation. The structural elements include a lack of comparisons between schools and school options, feeding into the zoned school, a lack of networking or seeking information regarding school options, highlighted by a lack of social network formation and information exchange to guide that experience. Participants' responses illustrate the variations of this category.

Lisa, an educated professional, did not know where to start the process.

> **Lisa:** I'm just not really sure where to start other than just calling the schools, which is basically on my list this week. …As far as getting information, I feel like I think I have two other options, which are Eastlake elementary and Toomer Elementary. And I think they're a little harder to get in, just to talk to somebody. Anyway that's what I guess I'll find out this week. I can't say that for sure, but I guess that's just what I've gotten so far from.

Nora was unfamiliar with her choices because her child was 5 months old. She was not actively looking.

> **Nora:** Uhm…Well, I haven't done a lot of research on the public schools, yet, because I've heard that the principals have changed at Toomer Elementary and that's where we are. While she's so young that I - we will see what happens. I've heard opinions of other mothers and I looked up private schools in the area and just tried to get a feel for what's around. And what's available. Uhm, as far as challenges, I wouldn't say that there have been any so far. But, since I am not actively looking for something... I am not with any intent to do anything right now. It's been more with an eye to the future, a casual perusal of the web and talking to other mothers that have been in different places.

Mary expressed her lack of childcare and educational knowledge as a disadvantage to her one-year-old child. She also mentioned the need for a mentor for the general aspects of child-rearing.

> **Mary:** At his age, up until really recently I haven't been all that concerned about the education program and all that. It is the attention and all that and how sweet they were to the kids. Now I am kind of at a loss because I don't even know how to approach looking at an education program. I don't even know what I am supposed to be doing with him, frankly. So I am basically, I start with close to the neighborhood, close to home and then look at what each one offers and all of that. I don't have anyone telling me or mentoring me. He is being raised by a wolf, my friend.

Linda is connected via the neighborhood network, but her actual participation is limited because of her work schedule. She is a business owner and a single parent, and finds there is never enough childcare available. Financially, she is willing to make sacrifices for the best education she can provide for her four year old son.

> **Linda:** There is a good Grant Park network, Association or whatnot, I know of them because I signed up with them and I get regular e-mails. And I get e-mails pretty much every day on topics about raising your kids where to go, what not to do, what thing has been recalled. So, there are groups by age available to you and they have playgroups. But we meet during the workday and I just can't. I would love to go join them for playgroups, but there's no way that I can do it. I've never really attended

> one. There's definitely a good support system out there. It's just that, I, if you're working parent, there's just no chance. … **[**Are you talking about preschool or any schools?] Not yet. I'm trying to avoid it [laughter]. [What is the public school here?] I don't even know. I'm not sure what it's called. I'm trying to think that I don't have to take him elementary school just yet, but still, you know, I don't know. I just know that I would not be able to afford a private school and just hoping he gets into one of the free good schools, because it is something that.. I'd rather spend more on his education and eat Ramen noodles, knowing he gets a good education.

Cecilia is another parent whose participation in the neighborhood social network is restricted due to her employment. She does state that the mothers are active in the playgroups. There is a flexibility and informality that resonates through the neighborhood, so Cecilia does feel comfortable, but she wishes that she did not have to make a school choice at all. Cecilia pointed out that it was very simple for her to find out her school options.

> **Cecilia:** That I know that there is a really active playgroup that I don't participate in because I work. So, I find that a lot of people who I meet up with at the Park. They know each other already, through those playgroups. And if you don't... everybody still pretty friendly, but there is definitely like a larger community of families that… or moms I should say. I'm sure dads could be included, but I haven't heard a lot of that... who really know each other because they get together through these larger playgroups. I'm not part of that, because I work, but again to the handful of good friends that I have, my friends off and on have participated in the larger playgroups ….Oh I don't want to.. [laughter], to me oh just really, my children are obviously, their education is obviously so important to me, but it's just hard to find the time that I need to really put into those decisions. So it's just hard. I wish I lived in an area that had really good public school system, because I wouldn't have to worry about it. So I am kind of frankly dreading the whole process. But obviously it is what I need to do so, I just am trying to find some time over the holidays to focus in on the applications and the interview process and everything else I need to get done to get the kids in school.

For Elaine, the insular decision-making process produces vague options.

> **Elaine:** It has mainly just been online searching for school options - mainly online and a few people mention a school here or school there. I think, Imagine Wesley, I overheard someone say something about it so I looked it up. … I usually just looked it up for myself. …She does not go to school. So, we are starting,.. We want to get her in something just two days a week in the fall. So we are looking and that is about it. The problem we are running into is priced-based. The one that we would like to send her to is a little bit more expensive than the next one that's on our list, but the next one that's on our list is inside of a church. And we are not religious so we are having this tug of emotion like.... Do we really want to send her to a religious-based or... I think it's just in a church. ... I mean, she is our first kid and we really don't know what we're doing. So we've just kind of been doing it for the two years. I just assumed it was in the church then there was some kind of religious instruction being taught.

Heidi is an education academic, yet her inability to make a decision yields detachment from the decision and the significance of school selection altogether.

> **Heidi:** I was just talking about this with my husband, because we went out to dinner last night. We ran into our pediatrician and his wife, who are selling their house because the public school didn't work out, and so now they are sending their kids to private school and … they were trying to convince us to send our kid to private school. Next year my son will start pre-school. There are basically three options, and I go back-and-forth between the three because everyone speaks passionately about one of the three. And I can sort of be drawn into any one of the three options. I can see them as interesting depending on my mood. The challenge is that the one that I really like is not geared towards working moms. It is a co-op, which means that I have to be involved in working in it. There is a lot of work for me and that is very stressful and it is very little time. And so it is really not useful for me. The Montessori–I am worried it is too rigid. There is another one that has a religious focus and I am not religious, so I worry about that. I am not sure yet, that (pause)… I am not sure yet. I want to say that some degree it doesn't matter that much. That probably he is going to be fine no matter where he is. … But the reality is he is probably going to be fine no matter where I send him and it doesn't really matter that much. As long as they don't beat the children, it is really probably not that big of a deal. And I think people make it out to be much bigger deal than it is. I think people take it a little too seriously and I think that it is important not to get too drawn into it. Just send your kids

> somewhere and if they are unhappy, you take them out and put them somewhere else.

Jackie works full time and finds that she is not aware of, nor prepared for, the school-selection process. Although she has not had time to attend meetings, research or network with other parents, she mentions an interest in the opinions and choices of others who have opted for the charter school.

> **Jackie:** You know, again, it's just talking to the other parents is what I've done so far. I feel like I am behind the wheel - like the other parents know a lot more about what the options are and are a lot more involved like in the Toomer Elementary PTA and things like that. I know that the information is easily out there, I just have to access it and educate myself. I just haven't taken the time to do that yet. So really the challenge is me carving out the time to search and form my own opinions. I think that what I need to do is go to some of the Toomer Elementary PTA meetings, do some research on the Internet and continue to talk to other parents as well until you learn what exactly are the charter schools in the area and why other people would opt for the charter schools.

Deb utilizes the internet to research schools, but she is unable to find information regarding a particular school. In reality, that school does not correspond to the zoned schools that are options for Deb. The school she is seeking is only available to Decatur residents, thereby indicating that Deb is not knowledgeable of what options are truly available. Her main source of information appears to be the internet.

> **Deb:** One of the challenging things I have noticed is that in the surrounding areas, at least, I know I have been trying to get information on Oakhurst elementary, which is in Dekalb County. And I haven't been able to find any information. I usually use great schools.net. I can't remember which one it is to find out a lot of the information because you can go on there and find out the test scores and the demographics and how many kids are on free and reduced lunch and that kind of stuff. And for some

> reason that school and maybe it's because it's a city of Decatur school -- that all have the information. So that is pretty frustrating to me because all of the Dekalb County schools, you can go on and find out about those things. And also, you know, that website has been really helpful too.

Joselyn's focus and experience as an African American gentrifier in the neighborhood are more significant than the school-selection process at this point in her life. Her inability to find a niche has created a vacuum for her where there might be a neighborhood social network. The result is that her sole source of information has been as an insider in the school system and her current status as a private and public school parent. She does not have a social connection to the neighborhood.

> **Joselyn:**…But that we are also kind of stuck. We are just kind of stuck in the middle because the Black families don't look at us and feel like they know us because they don't. And then the White families aren't like, "Hey, can your daughter come over for a play date?" You know what I mean. So we are just kind of stuck in the middle and so I don't know. ….But right now it just feels like we are in a really strange place being middle-class and being people who aren't native Black people to Kirkwood, because we don't fit with the Black people and we don't necessarily fit with the White people. We are just here. So that would be, I think, the most important thing. That kind of creates some type of…. I don't know it's not dissonance. I don't know what it is. It is just some weird space.

Joselyn attributes her lack of social connections to her race. She does not make attachments which she says leaves her in "some weird space". The inability to make attachments inhibits her place-making in the neighborhood and, subsequently, the neighborhood school, creating a variation in the lived experience of school selection.

The school-selection process for LONER responses demonstrates an isolated decision-making process with little or no social resources with which participants can inform their decision.

FOLLOWER

FOLLOWER responses are distinguished by an increased role of parental agency and an escalated reliance on social networks for information regarding schools. The importance of social networks is highlighted by these participants. School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a reaction to social networks operating at a collective level of information exchange and decision-making. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is who is sending their children to what school and the way information is evaluated and prioritized. The structure of the experience consists of several elements: the quantity and quality of parents' social networks, who goes to what school, and the quantity and quality of information exchanged regarding school options. Seeking information, mentors are often sought and selected by in the responses. FOLLOWER is large, so I created subdivisions of the variation of responses based on the role of mentors and those who go against the tide of influence.

An illustration of the variation of FOLLOWER begins with Rosie, a long-time resident involved in the first wave of gentrification. Rosie provides a reflective historical background on the formation and separation of social groups in the neighborhood from the original playgroups. As time went by, families formed smaller factions.

> **Rosie:** My experience in this neighborhood has been that the preschools, and there are several now, as well as the public schools, the public

> elementary schools, actually serve also as social integrators and social networks for the neighborhood. … When you have a little baby and you're really not trying to get too far away from home, if you don't have to, to be able to meet with other folks. But it also was one of those things that as time went on, it also absolutely showcased very different parenting styles. So within a group of 20 families, there were maybe 18 moms and two dads. You know, after maybe two 2 1/2 years of meeting, those playgroups had sort of become three different playgroups, where people could congregate to then socialize and hang out, and doing so, playgroups with folks that they were most comfortable with. But I am not convinced that that's such a bad thing. Even though the playgroup ended up breaking into what I guess you could call cliques. And I think that in the long run it's not such a bad thing. The cliques were not about my kid's better than your kid. Eighteen kids was a large playgroup in the neighborhood where most people have three bedroom homes.

Florence commences the interview with inclinations toward a SEARCHER custom fit/family fit argument based on finances. She feels confident in following the same decisions as her peer group. Florence then changes course toward the school choice of her social network, trusting their decisions for her children and demonstrating a reliance on peer opinions and acts to guide her school-selection process, resulting a FOLLOWER categorization.

> **Florence:** ...I have talked to people, but I want to go over and do a visit at Drew Charter School. But you actually get five days of free preschool over there, and a four-year-old kindergarten since it's a charter school and so we're thinking about maybe moving her over there so that we don't have any overlap (two children in daycare for financial reasons). And I have a couple of friends who are doing that, and I trust their judgment. In the end, it would all come down to me going there and checking it out, but they're just a couple of friends that are very trustworthy individuals that have their child's interests… You know, they just have really high standards, and I trust them.

Ruby makes her decisions based on her own research, but she absorbs all the information around her as she chooses a school for her child.

> **Ruby:** Through people, I'd say that through our own research just kind of looking into the neighborhood options. You know, those kinds of... online are through other parents and I think from being at preschool, there's sort of... You hear so much more through other people. I think if he wasn't in it, preschool, it would've been a little harder. Also, we live a block from the Neighborhood Charter School. So for us, you know, we see those kids and we know a lot of the families who go there and many of the kids from his preschool go there so it's that kind of a transition was easy for us.

Roxanne looks at the K-12 span of education to see what long-term school options are available as she contemplates a residential move in order to educate her children.

> **Roxanne:** I think what's frustrating is that I realize just how screwed up our system is that you are real estate locked you are real estate districted with the school. I'm a huge proponent of our public school system and my husband and I don't want to do private school at all. But we are like, why is it real estate locked? and you just see it— like all of our different friends that live in different neighborhoods. It's like okay, if you live in Pine Hills, in a really expensive neighborhood and you pay high property taxes and pay a lot for your house then you have a good school. And everybody else can just, I don't know, swim with the sharks or just figure it out. So I think that there isn't a process of selection, unless you're willing to go private. ... I guess the only other issue is, because I talked to someone else doing research one time is that the selection process is what you do when you see your elementary school gets stronger, I am trying to think long-term too, not only where we can go for elementary, but the middle and high school and not having to bounce around or make it through a good elementary school and then go. Now I've got a find a new middle school or something like that to. I don't know if a lot of parents think that way, but I'm trying to think K through eighth grade to see how much stability is there—where we could be where we'd be satisfied. I'd like to have a program all the way through. That's a big concern, but I have, because I think after so many years of hearing parents complain about middle school... middle school is always tough.

The Role of Mentors

Along the lines of social network and social influence, some participants have candidly referred to their use and need for mentors. Mentors provided information ranging from basic childcare through the toddler year to preschools and schools. The prior experiences of mentors put them a childhood stage ahead of the FOLLOWERS and they were able to pass on their experiences and information. Informal mentor relationships play an important role in the FOLLOWER category as a peer source of information. Isabel uses the predecessors in her social network as mentors. She includes her own perspective, emphasizing the composition of the human environment of teachers and other parents who surround the child as what makes the educational experience memorable.

> **Isabel:** The successes [in finding out information] are always the other families who have done it before you. There's no doubt in my mind that's where the best information comes from and there are a wide variety of experiences from really good to really bad and I think that's where I get most of my information from. I think that…. And, again, it's not like I always share the perspectives of other people because I think I come from a little bit of a different place as an academic who kind of looks at these social issues from a different perspective. But I definitely think that, in my opinion, at this point, it's other families and teachers that make the experience …the actual teacher at the school or who your kid has.

Eliza also found parents of older birth cohorts to be the most helpful.

> **Eliza:** The most successful was talking to people who've been in the system, if you will, a while.

Nora finds the information exchanged in her social network to be useful.

> **Nora:** It is very useful because mothers certainly like to talk about schools, and they go into a lot of detail and a lot of depth when they are researching, so other mothers' information is helpful.

The result of following the footsteps of others is a matter of reflection for Rosalyn. She moved into the neighborhood to be close to family and quickly adopted their peer group. Rosalyn did not realize the extent of influence her social network would have on her as a parent.

> **Rosalyn:** So as far as school information to go to PTA meetings and not really go to the schools' website. I go to the school's website to see what's for lunch, but mostly... I guess I exchange information with my girlfriends who worked together with the kids… a lot of stuff was a picnic in the park or playgroup, definitely word-of-mouth. I am not... I did not research or go to all the schools. A lot of my girlfriends did that. So I just listened to their expert advice. So I have friends that were really, really involved. They started playgroup and they've been working on the PTA since before they had kids. And so I followed their lead. … I guess I would have been surprised as a... I put a tremendous amount of value in talking to moms who have older kids, even if it's just one or two years older. I guess I didn't know that as a mom or as a parent that I would rely on other parents for parenting and education and all that kind of information.

Rosalyn's experience in finding out information was based on her information exchange in her social network and a heavy dependency on the leadership of what others were doing. In retrospect, Rosalyn reflects and expresses regret at not having more forethought in her choice of neighborhood or school selection.

> **Rosalyn:** I kind of feel like I let this happen... let Kirkwood kind of happen to me. If I was to move again, and we might not stay here through our whole public education, or I wouldn't stay here for a whole public education. I got my information from my friends. I think with when we bought the house last year, I should've looked. In hindsight, I wish I would have looked in Decatur just a mile away, rather than in this single neighborhood, so they could go to the schools throughout high school, because I don't want them to go to at this point to go to [their designated] middle school. So that is a failure, a frustration that we didn't think farther and our kids' education future. We were just really thinking for the

> next couple of years, which I guess is fine. I guess the insight I think. I don't know... I think that this is where we could afford to buy a house and I think Toomer Elementary had the best schools that I thought we could afford. If that makes sense, I guess I would've wished that I... I don't know.. that I don't think I did enough research when we bought the house.

Mentoring with the older parents is a common theme, but some participants informally selected a peer to advise and guide them through the school-selection process. In the case of Ramona, she finds assistance from a specific peer from playgroup.

> **Ramona:** There's a girl in my playgroup who has two kids that are four years and three months, and an 18-month-old. So I listen to her. ….It's so hard, there's so many of them [schools]. You feel like it's going to change your child's life. I don't know, like every school was so different and you just hope you make the right decision, you guess.

Lisa began the process by calling the schools. Her interactions were not the most satisfying, but she contacted three schools. Lisa found most of her information from her neighborhood social network, where the majority of her network is the same birth cohort/school age as her children, so her efforts to find a mentor have not been fruitful.

> **Lisa:** And as far as finding out what my options are only through talking to other people from the neighborhood have I even been able to find out what my options are. And other parents who now have started their kids at some of the schools this year. I'm getting feedback from them now, which is helpful, because before I didn't know. Like I said most of our friends -- all of our kids are at the same age, so we are kind of all going through it together, and so it's rare to find people, I guess, that probably have not at least already started the process and get honest feedback.

Bernadette's insight regarding the influence of her social network was that group perception could play a significant role in the educational placement of one's child. She

explains how she did not follow the group's lead with her first child, but she did with her second child, yielding two different educational paths within the same neighborhood.

> **Bernadette:** I guess what has surprised me the most is what people like because other people like it. That is if there is a waiting list, it must be fantastic. And you don't have to know anything about the schools or why you think it's fantastic but that if everybody else wants to go there, surely it must be great. If everybody else is camping out for Mary Lin, surely there is a reason for it so I have to do it, too. And I don't know, that really surprised me in the whole process. How much is perception, based on other people's perceptions and not necessarily even their own reality. And I'm really surprised by how people group and make a decision that it's not an individual decision for your child. It's a group decision for your child, myself included, which is why my older son, who is hanging out there by himself. Individual decision, I didn't do it. [follow the group] Younger son… tons of kids, group decision, totally did it. But I wasn't really, you know everybody's like I don't want my kid to be a guinea pig. And it's my kid— it's my one shot. It's interesting to see that that one individual kid is in this lump of a group as long as the group's okay, the kid is okay. But individually, it's a different decision.

Bernadette approximates Nagel's (1991) "duality of self" dilemma where she gets right down to the grit of the individual versus the social good. Her "guinea pig" statement implies that attending the public school is a 'social experiment' that is acceptable if done as a group, where group decisions carry less risk than individual acts. Her argument describes a neighborhood where most families only have one or two children. As middle class parents, they are reluctant take risks in their educational decisions. They have limited choice opportunities in the school trajectory so their willingness to take risks with their child's lifelong success is low. In contrast to the groupthink of the FOLLOWER category, the next subsection describes how information obtained in one's social network does not influence the participants as they select schools outside the group model.

Against the Tide

The variation in responses demonstrates difference in the perception of the utility of social networks. Cecilia actually goes against the grain of her social network by choosing not to send her child to the same school as her best friend. As a single parent, she spends more time at work than at home so she is also dependent on the input of her colleagues at work.

> **Cecilia:** [Her 4 1/2-year-old will start kindergarten next year]. For me, with a little bit of research that I have done, I am not comfortable sending my children to Toomer Elementary. My best friend is sending her children there. I think it's wonderful and great but I am not comfortable with that. So I am at this point, applying to Paideia and the Children's school.

Rosie provides caution to the utilization of the social network for school selection.

> **Rosie:** I try not to put a lot of stock in that [the school information gossip/information exchange]. I think it's great, parents should talk to each other about their educational experiences. But I feel like I have been fortunate enough to get to be the beneficiary of great educational experiences. I have very legitimate communication skills, and so I think it is important that whatever concerns I have about my kids' schools need to be addressed with the people that are there. Because that happens in neighborhoods where people gather at the Park and the restaurants in the playgroups and stuff then people start trading stories back and forth about this happened to me and that happened to me. And I think that's one of the things that happened to Parkside Elementary. It hasn't been fair to Parkside Elementary. Neighborhood talk quickly decided that, well, there was a better educational opportunity at the Neighborhood Charter School.

FOLLOWER was the largest category of description, full of participant responses that signaled a reliance on peer perspective and the fluid exchange of information, including a variation in the content of the information exchanged.

SEARCHER

SEARCHER responses characterize the responses of parents who are highly active in the outcomes of their children's education, but in a more individualized manner. Participant responses are based on the present need to choose as well as the present state of the child and family in terms of time and context. The variation in response concerns regarding teachers, teaching methods, school location, parents' own cultural logic and childhood, and such appear in this category, with an orientation toward child fit and family fit. The sources of the information reflect the activation of individual agency. The process may not be oriented toward all children in the family, but on an individual child basis that still yields the best family fit.

School choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a strategic endeavor on an individual level based on each child's needs and current circumstances. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is generalized as what is the best family fit and subcategorized into (1) what is best for each child and (2) what is best for parents, yielding structural aspects that range in a non-binary continuum. Individual research and family fit characterize the school-selection process in SEARCHER. Although participants may have gleaned information from their social network, they were individually motivated to conduct their own investigation about their potential school

options. Strategic planning plays a role in the approach of SEARCHER, as exemplified by Ava.

> **Ava:** We have researched a lot. When we first sent my younger son to the Grant Park preschool, we were lucky to get a spot there and then a lot more options came around [she lists them]. We eventually sent my children to a Montessori uptown so we just kind of found out from different people and their experiences and talking to different people. It's mostly that we found out. And then, you know, the neighborhood options. I toured all of the schools and then toured the private schools. I spent like two years researching all that so I did not get the information from one specific friend, because most of our playgroup are our age or younger, but they had older siblings who were at the charter school so I would talk to all of them about it. Oh, it was a really long ordeal for us and we got spots in the Neighborhood Charter School and then I think we got a spot at Imagine Wesley, too.

Roxanne conducted her own research and navigated her own sources of information, but found that the lack of updated information on the public school system's websites hindered her ability to make an informed decision. Her individual efforts are hampered by the deficiency in easily-accessible public school information.

> **Roxanne:** ...but then I also tried to look at the [the public schools] site to see what I could learn about Toomer Elementary and it was awful. And I got really frustrated -- like the test scores hadn't been updated. They were from 2006 or something like that. There wasn't a lot of information on the teachers. I haven't looked at it in well over a year, but that was frustrating because you expect the same kind of that information out there than there was. And then there are websites like good schools.net. So I know that whenever anybody brings up the school in the neighborhood, well I'm an Atlanta native, so I assume I know everything about everything. But I don't when it comes down to really looking in to specific neighborhoods so I've looked at good schools.net to see what kind of rating things get on there.

Azalea describes the competitive aspect of individualism and how she used Facebook to get a glimpse of the wait list decisions and choice conversations. Her description details

how student spots were held and technology utilized to strategically affect the school-selection process.

> **Azalea:** …Like I am on Facebook, but I don't share everything on there but at the height of it, our grade is huge. There were people that were on both lists they had accepted at both schools and whatever-- if you get in that's great, but when you get into both places, you need to make a choice. So, people held out on their numbers until August, and so there was a lot of emotions running high, and so this one particular woman had on her own Facebook page, she literally had a list of everyone and where they were going, and she was holding onto both spots. So she was not being hypocritical. She was putting it out there. But like every three weeks, she would say something like, "Today is the day. We will let our number go at ----." I just wanted to unfriend her because I was so frustrated. It was an interesting social networking experience. So that part was frustrating, and when you just, I mean, again we did not get in until November, but all summer people were holding onto spots and so that was frustrating. So, I think the point of that was that you start to take it personally. If you are number 36 [on a wait list] like my friend is, you know that she is not going to get in.

Child Fit and Family Fit

Another component of the lived experience in SEARCHER responses is the child fit and family fit. Factors such as the hours, location, curriculum, teacher, child fit and the family fit are significant to choice. Ramona provides an example of the importance of family fit.

> **Ramona:** I just think there is a lot out there. There's also a lot hidden that you just have to know where to search. To do things, a lot of it is word-of-mouth, you know, different preschools and how you and your family would do best.

Azalea expands on the theme of child fit/family fit based on the personality of each child.

> **Azalea:** I will say, and truly, truly what I have learned is that it is personality driven. And that it is every child's own temperament. And there's sorting out that every five-year-old, when you're whole personality is finally exploding, it is very set at that point, and so are learning styles. So for us, teacher to child ratio was a very big deal. And we need that smaller classroom. We need more teacher involvement and more community spirit, and so that for us is what we learned most along the way the child's developmental process has got to fit the school.

Ava describes the isolation that occurs when a cohort divides because of daycare, preschool and, eventually, elementary choice. Yet, the sacrifice to not follow the group is based on what is the best child or family fit. Ava describes her school search as a lengthy, individual endeavor based on child fit. She ties that decision into the loss of membership in social networks due to those choices. Her emphasis on racial diversity led her away from the neighborhood options. She also utilized her social network to augment her knowledge of available options.

> **Ava:** When I first had my daughter, my older daughter, she was nine weeks old, and we started going to a playgroup and I really got to know the other mothers really well. And I felt like it was a real nice group that they have all sort of gone to different schools, mostly and to the neighborhood charter school and so we are really separated from that now. But it was really nice to have that in the beginning when they're little and they have play dates and I kind of think in the neighborhood. … You know, I think that we have become fairly isolated, because we go to a different school now. We are just not involved in the neighborhood like we used to be. I mean, I used to volunteer and we went to Grant Park Cooperative Preschool and did all of the volunteer work there. And now not so much, and we still have friends and the kids have play dates with their neighborhood friends. They have about three neighborhood friends where they used to have more. So it has changed, because we go to different schools….. And I think that I don't really have any insight about it. I think that every school is different for every kid and every family. And I think you have to look at your family's needs and what you want, and we chose…... it just seemed like a really good fit for him, and it turned out to be great and I don't regret that, but it's kind of difficult being isolated from the rest of the neighborhood and I think one thing about her

> school that we really like is that it has more racial diversity than the charter school does now. So the economic diversity is not very good, but I think I have noticed that the Neighborhood Charter School over the years has less and less diversity, and that was a priority for us.

Juliana, an education insider, expresses concern with regard to the racial diversity in her school choice for her older child, yet she has found the school provides a gratifying experience. Her preschooler, on the other hand, may not thrive in the same environment, and so she states her philosophy of how child fit supersedes all other criteria for selecting a school.

> **Juliana:** It has been, okay, so stressful. We are, I mean, I am not an educator, but… I am in schools every day. I have worked middle, high, elementary, everywhere. So, you know school is definitely important to me. I wanted to move to Grant Park, because at least there were options….. I mean Parkside Elementary was pretty much... it was between Neighborhood Charter School and Parkside Elementary and to tell you the truth, I've never even stepped foot in Neighborhood Charter School. I know I should have. I know I should have researched a better. And I have nothing against Neighborhood Charter School, but just when I went to Parkside Elementary, I mean, I really fell in love with it was just very traditional education. I'm not totally thrilled with the fact that it's not as racially diverse. I mean, it's 90% Black. My child is the only White kid in the class. But whatever. I wish there were more racial diversity there. That bothers me, but other than that. It has been a great experience, but I do stress over the fact that they did not make AYP. Now there is all this about the erasures with the [standardized test] junk going on. So like I am constantly thinking "Are we making the right decision leaving [our child] in there?" But since pre-K, she has had a teacher of the year every year. She has had wonderful teachers, wonderful classes. She has made a great group of friends that she has been with for three years. She's in Challenge, is doing great, but I am always like. Oh gosh. There is not good parent involvement over there, not like at Neighborhood Charter School. So it is stressful to kind of make sure that I am making the right decisions. [And for her child, next year] I have no idea what is going to be out there... everything is fluid. Your child might change, you might change. And so you just have to, you know, nothing is set in stone….

Heidi, like Rosie, demonstrates the independence and self-sufficiency of SEARCHER as she discusses her confidence in her own ability to choose. The criteria guiding her decision in the school-selection process is family fit, more than child fit.

> **Heidi:** [On how she evaluates and prioritizes information] A little bit based on my own knowledge of it education and my own values about education, so through that lens. It depends on what people are telling me. Like, if you people are talking to me about this really great school. They teach them how to read or write when they are three years old. Well, I don't value that. That is not something I value. I have really strong values about what I care about for early education. Like, I really care about free play. I really want him to play, I really want him to have fun. I want him to think that school is fun. I want people to understand how to do that work well. And so my values are part of how I assess that information, and some people who I think have similar values to me, I hear what they say differently than people who care about early academic instruction, which is less important to me. So depending on what they tell me that they value, I assess what they tell me about the school differently.

Heidi's values and beliefs form the basis for her decisions. During her interview, Heidi wavered between the three options she would consider. Then, at the end of the interview, she detaches from making a decision at all, which I included in the LONER responses, demonstrating how participants appear in multiple categories based on the variation of the responses. Eliza understands that the child fit is an individual custom fit and engages in activities to support the personalities of her children and their dreams.

> **Eliza:** ... we should be realistic on what is really good for our children and making choices, because we will constantly have in the end certain standardized tests. And our children need to be prepared for that, but also allowing them to have breathing room to explore. To do things, you know that they actually want to do versus if they are in the public school setting, and you're saving money is like that. But they want to be challenged in other areas, you know, and they want to do like fencing or to find those activities that the schools don't necessarily offer. To find those things, to

> help each of your children to flourish. My son…wants to do Japanese, Chinese and Hindi languages. Well, you know he needs to be in an environment that will help him, that says okay this is what you need to do to nurture each child.

Eliza elaborates on the custom fit for the child and how a parent lives the experience of actively engaging and supporting an African American child. However, Eliza acknowledges that each child is different, even within families, so that her son may thrive where her daughter did not.

> **Eliza:** Insight is whereas instead of just looking at the overall.. oh this is this is here I am the majority just saying this is a good school. To see how it fits with each child now that I have more because what works for one child definitely won't work with mine, you know, and actually I just had a meeting the other day at my house with some people about starting a school close by in ___. Some people don't want it and some do and I was saying because I have a Black son, his needs are totally different from a White boys here in this area because of where we are socially, where's the crime, who's doing the crime, you know. Trying to balance that and seeing what is good for each my children you know. He didn't do well at ___. It may be a very good option for my other child. He's a real go-getter. … we just recently found that the charter school nearby which I didn't think would be a good pick for my son …they have pre-K program so my younger son is in …so we are looking into that more so than looking into Toomer Elementary. We've been to meetings in Toomer Elementary we've been to meetings at Drew Charter School. … We found other schools and we've looked near my husband's job.

Patrice, a former teacher and a new parent not yet enrolled in the school system, mentions the ineffective and outdated website information on the school website, demonstrating her individual efforts to seek information.

> **Patrice:** Uhhmmm…the challenges are that the websites with the school first of all. We live in right where Dekalb and Fulton County come together and that's kind of confusing knowing which schools you can go to or not go to. And they had these charter schools all around you know,

> and those have a little… those have a target area for a kind of… If you're in this perimeter you're eligible, if you're not, then you can't. If you're in this perimeter, you're a priority. If you're in the next circle, you can get on the list, but you may not get in. If you go one out, you can. You can live close to schools, and they won't even be able to tell you what the parameters are very clearly. So, you could have a friend who lives in your neighborhood with the same zip code who's eligible, but you are two streets over, so you're not. So that's confusing.

Patrice also expresses a mature appreciation for the significance of child fit/school fit which is a priority for her in her school-selection process.

> **Patrice:** I guess you always have anxiety. If you have worked in schools, you know that schools can have a great reputation and stink for your kid. You know it can be a great school and not be good for your kid, so you'd do you know, you just have to try that, at the same time you want this. That mystery... that amorphous…you know you just want it to feel excited about it. You do not have anxiety about it (laughter). But I always say I'm going to try this school no matter what it is. And if it was Paideia for $20,000 a year, I would say I'm just trying it. So we are going to try it.

Mary Jane is confused by the crosswinds of information, so she withdraws in order to base her opinion on her own child's needs and fit her child fit/family fit.

> **Mary Jane:** God, I don't know. I mean, I don't really know. I hear good things and bad things about all schooling options. So it's kind of like you've got to figure out what is going to work for you and your schedule or what your priorities are like for us with my kids. It's the language. It's the having a second language that's a really big priority. So I kind of filter based on that like where we can get that. The most experience, the most exposure to that...

Cecilia demonstrates agency in isolation of the neighborhood social network. She is self-reliant for the choices she makes, but they are based on family fit in terms of geographical space.

> **Cecilia: [**How do you know what to do?] Well, it's pretty easy it's pretty self-explanatory. You just go online like with Paideia, for example. The process is outlined very clearly. ... and I still have to do more research. I am actually going in for the interviews and the tours and all that... but the way that I have come to that those options has been through… obviously they are in my community, because I love my community, and I'd rather have... and also, just because of my situation being a single mom, I'd rather not have to travel too far. So geographically speaking, those are near my house. One is near my work and the way that I have heard a lot about a lot of positive things about those programs is through my colleagues at work. That is where I get a lot of information from.

Individual interests best represent the SEARCHER category as the responses demonstrate a concern for the effect of school choice within the family.

Educational Agenda

Iris's comments reflect the distinct consumption patterns referred to by Bourdieu (1984) and others who describe the gentrification of neighborhoods. She has education credentials, providing her with an education-insider perspective, and a distinct taste for education based on who constitutes the educational environment (See Cucchiara, 2008; Holme, 2002, Reay, 2004). She describes the type of peer group she would like to surround her child.

> **Iris:** I think that one of the reasons that we were not looking at the traditional public school is that the public schools have a bad reputation. So we looked for something else, and I think that other people do, too.

> For example, at Drew Charter School, it's not as involved as maybe the neighborhood charter school, but it is a charter. The parents are involved, there are different organizations. It's not just your generic the usual thing, and I think that we are a neighborhood that looks for something different. So yes, I think if you look at the demographics at how many of the children are on food stamps or some sort of aid, because that tells you if there are families who come from more educated backgrounds. You want your child to be in a classroom with other children, who have educated parents that come from families where they are encouraged to learn and explore and they're in the school where things are done in a way other than the traditional way with the teachers standing there preaching or talking to the children - go where the children get hands-on experience. I have a Master's in education, so it's important to me that my children have an opportunity to learn by doing since I know that physically, that's how people learn best -- adults and children alike.

Lisa, too, prioritizes the quality of curriculum in her school-selection process, but diversity as well.

> **Lisa:** Everybody's priorities are kind of different. I think all of the school options that we have are really different. So right now, that sort of is something we are trying to decide is between the how much curriculum-based versus, I don't want to say a play-based, because it's the school that we're talking about pre-K for three or four-year-olds. I don't necessarily want to put her in a fully regimented program. But at the same time, I guess that it's good structure, I don't know. So I'm not really sure. Yeah. Everybody's priorities are different and I know, that really the biggest priority for me personally right now is sort of diversification.

Ann's values and beliefs as well as her insider knowledge as a former teacher of how the school system operates provide her with cultural capital and social capital, in the form of insider relationships, which aid her in the school-selection process.

> **Ann:** Where I want to send her? My husband and I are pretty... unless some major changes happen in APS, we will not send her to the public schools. I am not real confident in their new change in the high schools that they are incorporating. ... We have talked about moving to Decatur,

> because we like their public school system. They just have really good success rates. So, unless some…and granted I don't know where things will be in 11 years. When she starts middle school, but I'm not confident in the charter middle school and they still have some growing pains. I am not confident in the public middle schools. I have seen the kids that have come out of some of those middle school programs and it worries me. ... and I have seen the kids that have come out of some of the other schools. The kids who come out of Neighborhood Charter School are usually well-prepared, because every student is different. So I can't blanket statement all of them but some of the students have come out of the public elementary schools very far behind. And they are generally bright kids, so I worry about that.

In conclusion, curriculum and instruction are elements considered in this category, but they are part of a deeper vision of what schools should look like and who the students will be in the schools they select for their children.

Individual efforts

The subcategory, individual efforts, is an example of others' responses that pertain to SEARCHER, but do not have a commonality in their variation. For example, Juliana's search is individually-guided as she based the requisites for the setting of her children's school on her nostalgic experiences, trying to recreate the same situation for her children. Ball, et al. (1995; Ball, 2006) state that images from parents' own personal experience plays a powerful role with regard to the choice of where and with who one's child will go to school. For Juliana, her personal experience plays a role in the choice of her neighborhood and in the school selection process for her children.

> **Juliana:** …I think I was kind of try and find somewhere as close to [where she grew up] as... with older houses and parks and sidewalks and big trees, and so I found... well it took us a while to be able to afford Grant

> Park or the house we wanted in Grant Park. … Just hearing so from people, you know, if you like look on the web... I went to all public schools, and I went to very racially and socio-economically diverse schools, and I went to a predominantly Black high school, but it was very diverse. It was near the university, so a lot of eclectic creative intellectual types... but that is where all my friends come from. So again like trying to re-create that for my kids. I was looking at where is this in Atlanta?

Deb has strong opinions that lead her to make school choice decisions in isolation from her peers. She is unable to discuss the topic of school due to her strong opinions on education, leaving her detached from the conversation, and not contradicting the harmonious viewpoints or groupthink of the playgroup. The individual opinions of others do not influence her due to the differences in their cultural logic and hers. Education credentials are significant to how she evaluates the content and perspective from whom she gets information.

> **Deb:** I guess I feel really good with the type of people that I have met that live in the neighborhood and that I have met through these times that I've gotten together. I feel like we have a lot in common. We all have kind of similar thoughts and views on our kids, which I really like that, because that is what I really wanted. But on the other hand when the topic of school comes up I tend to be uncomfortable because I don't... I have very strong opinions on what I think is right for my child. So, I don't like to share too much about how I feel, because I feel like it might be offensive to some people. I tend to just generally be in the conversation, but never get into the specifics. …. So, I don't like to say too much about that choice or anything stuff like that, because I don't want to offend anybody, you know.... I feel like this kind of stuff is such a personal decision. And people bring their whole background with them. You know, as far as where they went to school, what their education was like. They bring so much of that into what they want for their child. It is hard for me to trust people's opinions. If I don't know something about their background, I can't just take it like okay, it's that person's opinion. If I knew that, say they were a teacher or, I was talking with him a little bit about their children or their children go to school, I would probably take more stock into that opinion versus someone who maybe didn't have an education background or wasn't very active in the school maybe.

Isabel describes the complexity of choosing schools as a single parent, alluding to a preference for private schools. Her education and cultural logic have led her to the path of private education, but she is economically unable to follow through. As a result, one of her children attends a private preschool and her other child attends the local public school for kindergarten.

> **Isabel:** First of all, let me just say this here is a quotation for you, "picking a school for your child is hell." It is so difficult. It is one of the most difficult decisions to make, I think, as a parent. Especially if you are living in a city like Atlanta, when you do not have the economic resources to send them to any private school you want. So, essentially, I have been able to send them to this private school for younger care because that is your only option really when they're at that age, when they are so small, but economically at this point… economically, as a split family with two parents and now we are affording two households so we can barely afford the private education for one child (preschool), never mind two.

Jolene independently has researched and found a substantial list of options is available. She is not satisfied with the quality of any of those options for her child.

> **Jolene:** I think finding out the options is not really that difficult, because I can just talk to people and I think, again, that at Oakhurst Cooperative, there are people that live all over, so I hear about a lot of different schools. I guess even just talking to people at the pool this summer and over the years; I have heard a lot of schools that I've just sort of made a mental note of. Of course, a lot of them aren't options for us, because they are either in Decatur or Dekalb County. Even like the charter schools that are close by, but not in the city of Atlanta that I feel like as far as finding out about the schools has been fine. I feel like having access to it has been fine. I feel like if you can make an appointment to any place and to observe it. I think that just the actual options that are out there are what I'm not thrilled with.

Joselyn is an African-American parent-gentrifier and, thus, represents a different perspective on the social networking and community collaboration previously depicted. She describes the neighborhood social isolation for her and her family. Their decision-making is based within the confines of the family and coworkers. She discusses the existence of a support network of White middle-class mothers in the gentrifying neighborhood, but she expresses the lack of such a network or place for her that extends to her children and their social networks via playdates.

> **Joselyn:** The interesting thing about Kirkwood is that we don't social network in Kirkwood. I like privacy, and we like our family unit and we are very exclusive with whom we invite into our space and our family unit. And so some of the things that I was initially seeing with the neighborhood, I wasn't liking. So I think I shot myself completely down. And honestly, I don't feel like I've missed much. So, I never really opened myself back up to it. Yeah, you know, this is the thing about play dates in the neighborhood, we don't do play dates in the neighborhood. And part of it. I think is that there is a network of Kirkwood moms who I'm sure are… there might be a few Asian moms that they are pretty much primarily White, I believe. And they will send out like to Kirkwood parents emailed us like play date at Bessie Branham Park. And I think that they probably get together and do things, but I don't know. My experience hasn't always been that people are very welcoming. And I think that it has to do with that this neighborhood is in transition and so you have Black families and then you have White families. And I don't think there are a lot of Black families that White Kirkwoodians think are actually middle-class. So even though you might send out all of the vibes that, okay, you are middle-class and you are educated, there still, to me feels like there is a perception. You know... it's not as friendly of a vibe as you might suspect, but I don't think that is necessarily the case for the White moms who have moved it to Kirkwood. Like I think they might feel like it is a very friendly environment, because I think they have created so many different supports for themselves.

Joselyn's lived experience runs counterculture to the White mothers in Kirkwood, yielding decisions at the individual level in her school selection process. Giselle said she did a lot of her own research in preparing for her children's education.

However, she incorporates others' information, most specifically when they have similar agendas.

> **Giselle:** I do a lot of it too, my own research. I also will have conversations with people to find out to get different perspectives on the same approach. I know that we're all sort of out there looking and wanting to make the best decision the best choice we can for our kids. And we all sort of have our own agendas and sometimes they are similar. So we can communicate about what's important to us. ...I know that there are lots and lots of options. I know that there are opportunities. It does require time and effort to go and look to go and talk to people at the school within the administration and outside of it. I know that that's exactly what it takes of parent involvement and community involvement. That's changed everything a lot of people kind of define that as either if it's public, it's not so great, but if it's private, it's got to be better. But really, what happens in a public school— if you get people involved and parents on board, you can make it happen and change the way it operates and functions. I've seen it happen.

Giselle states she has seen the change that comes from the collaboration of the parents in public school. However, in her second response, she states that she has never researched the school online, found information, nor attended a playgroup. In addition, her child is currently attending a private kindergarten.

> **Giselle:** I do, even though Kirkwood's the neighborhood school is maybe not the best choice, I think it has the potential to be. I think Toomer Elementary, in a few years, could be a fantastic choice, for it's beginning to get people involved. There are some parents already who are banding together saying "This is our school, this is our community school. We want to create something here."... [Do you know of any coalitions here like Kirkwood school coalition? Kirkwood babies? Have you been on the website?] I've never been on it, I don't know about it. I haven't even invested the time in it.

SEARCHER responses represent variations based on individual research and choice as a reaction to what is available. Participant responses demonstrate active research processes and well-informed options. However, evidence does not show collaboration with peers to form those opinions nor share their information with others. Participant responses concentrated on their individual needs and desires.

COLLABORATOR

In the COLLABORATOR category, school choice in gentrifying neighborhoods is experienced as a proactive endeavor engaged in by citizens who may or may not be parents when they begin their (parental) involvement in the school. They may make an effort to increase the quality and value of schools for future offspring or it may be part of their neighborhood investment to increase the value of market-rate real estate. The referential meaning assigned to the experience is how one can add value through involvement–creating an opportunity for the activation of agency to improve the school and a reflective awareness of their approach. The structural elements forming the experience include intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (i.e. social justice, social activists trying to do "the right thing".) Leadership is presented in the form of initiative and mentoring. The strategic use of social networks accomplishes the participants' agendas. Experiences in this category are defined by the determination, leadership, skills and perseverance of the participants themselves, not fate or chance. Strategy, leadership and initiative culminate to forge a path out of the status quo. Several participants expressed experiences reflecting this category.

Agency and action are concurrent themes in the categories of description. The activation of agency is demonstrated in each category and how the agency manifests itself is the action. The illustrative quotations for COLLABORATOR reflect this agency and action more than the subsequent categories, because it is a hallmark feature of active parent citizenship. COLLABORATOR responses represent agency in action and how parent-gentrifiers effect change in their lived experiences of the school selection process.

Patrice joined the PTA prior to enrolling a child in the school, and invested her energy to counter the negative reputation surrounding her neighborhood school. She also ran the playgroup for two years and took the initiative to mentor other playgroup mothers, per their interviews.

> **Patrice**: ...And I joined the PTA this year even though my kids were not there, just to get out there and get involved and see what's going on. Every time I'm up there, I like it more. ….I would say it has been interesting seeing people who are trying to improve the school counter the rumor mill. It's interesting seeing how that happens, because you really do have to have data.

Delilah's experience in navigating the social networks and getting involved began with her passing out business cards, organizing a playgroup and eventually serving as the coordinator for the entire program and its database.

> **Delilah:** ... We got embedded in the neighborhood, and we had a baby… I started looking for some social support so that I could be with other mothers with small babies, and the Grant Park Parent Network had started about a year and a half prior to that so I was aware that it was there. So I went to them and said "Hey, I would like to serve the playgroup. I need to meet some other people," and then for a very long time after that, like six months, I walked to the Park with my name and number written on pieces of paper with my e-mail and just handed them out with like, "Oh, you

> have a baby. Do you want to be in the playgroup with me?" I literally handed them out. So I actually started one of the playgroups here in Grant Park. …It was one of the perks if you coordinated a group—you got to [name the group]. So if you coordinate, you can call your group whatever you want. …. It went online and it became a completely different animal entirely, but just in the five years ... it went from four very disorganized databases of about 135 families on to almost 600.

Delilah reflects on the growth trend in family-gentrifiers and how the options increased as families chose to invest, activate agency, and stay in the neighborhood.

> **Delilah:** So there was this massive, rapid explosion of population and baby population, because people stopped leaving. It used to be the people left the neighborhood when their kid hit five, because they needed a school and there wasn't one that was quality for people to want to stay. Or else people send their kids private. So if you couldn't afford private, you needed to leave when your child started kindergarten. But once we started to have a charter school and some of the other resources in the neighborhood, people really started investing and staying. There started to be a lot more preschools and they started the cooperative preschool and then they started [lists several options]….and then every year there seemed to be more choices in terms of where you could send your kid if you were in one of these intown neighborhoods.

Another example of activating agency in COLLABORATOR was the spreadsheeter–who calculated every option available in advance, beginning with preschool. As Azalea and Roxanne describe, the spreadsheet is their informal tracking and updating of school options.

> **Azalea:** There is a ton of information available on their [each school's] websites. Each school's website. And I knew this was coming and I'm very methodical, and so I have been starting a while ago. And I have this huge spreadsheet of, you know, it started with preschool because that's very hard to get into. Our classes are large, and so that is very much a factor that you have to think about because we did not get in anywhere our first year of preschool. That was a big wake-up call, and so I was

> planning ahead and knowing that... so anyway I just have this big spreadsheet. And I'm looking at it.

Roxanne also generates a spreadsheet of information in order to manage the options available to her children.

> **Roxanne:** We are zoned for Toomer Elementary. ….I have visited physically to that school and done a lot of research, because there's just so much information online. Even when looking at preschools with them, I made a spreadsheet of all the possibilities. How many days a week, what hours, what tuition... and I think that looking at public schools is just more challenging for parents to get out there and do the research. You kind of, in our neighborhood, you see things posted. And they're having meetings and I went to a couple of those meetings early on, but then I also tried to look at the [the public schools] site to see what I could learn about Toomer Elementary and it was awful. .... so I've looked at good schools.net to see what kind of rating things get on there.

Agency was present in the form of scheduling. Parents scheduled time or created flexibility to advocate for their children as exemplified by Isabel. Isabel's level of agency is evident in her decision to change job responsibilities so that she can be more involved in the education of her son in his kindergarten class in the public school system–an example of the education-insider.

> **Isabel:** I think that one reason I've stuck it out [with her child attending] at Toomer Elementary is that, I was going to tell you that my job is teaching. So I will be working 9 to 5 and so I can be at school more [as an involved parent] in the Fulton County. And so that is why we are hanging in there. …And just now we seem to be hitting stride. And again, if my job changing so that I could be there more in the spring, there is no way that I think that this would work out. I have to say that I have a tiny bit of concern, because that I think economically for me it seems that I am taking time out of how I can provide for my family economically as a single parent to be at the system you see, so it is like, it is all intertwined. It's not just education. It's every aspect of your social life. It just really pulls at your heartstrings. Because you want your kid to be loved when

> you're gone and you want your kid to be treated and supported in the best possible way at school.

Other forms of agency included reconstruction of the neighborhood park by Bernadette and her social network.

> **Bernadette:** When my oldest son was born, there were very few people that had kids in Kirkwood. When my younger son was born there were a lot more families, and so a couple of moms and I got and said "Let's meet on Thursdays and just kind of hang out and let the babies play and invite anyone you know who has a kid to playgroup." Our park was condemned, and so I said, "They are tearing down our park and they're not going to put in a new playground, so we need to figure that out." And so the playgroup moms got together and raised $85,000 to build a playground. And that is now where most of my social networking is at - Kirkwood Park.

Iris engages in formal neighborhood sessions where everyone gets together to share their knowledge about school options.

> **Iris:** I think the successes have been in that communication between parents and having those formal sessions where we say let's get together and everybody bring to the table, what they know. The challenge is that it is informal, so you are learning from other people's subjective experiences or what they remember from what they read. And maybe I haven't looked hard enough, but I have not seen something formal written about what the options are for what ages, and what the cost is. So it has been kind of a you hear about something, you run off to check it out.

Nanette also expressed her activation of agency as an investment prior to having children of her own. Through the activation of group agency, change occurred at the elementary school.

> **Nanette:** We right off the bat became very active in the Kirkwood neighbors organization and any resident who moved to Kirkwood, if they

> just go to a single KNO meeting. They can immediately meet at least 50 people they can know. There are all different committees. So, the education committee is really what started and coexisted with the school coalition many years ago. …really got it started many years ago. [Someone] started that because she was newly pregnant or had just had her daughter, and she wanted to actually see our neighborhood school, improving so that that way our neighborhood school was a viable option for neighbors. I guess out of that group came the school coalition….They surveyed a lot of existing parents in the school so basically the information that was obtained during the surveys. We were able to present that to [the public school system to remove the old principal].

While her comments superficially explain the process of school improvement in a gentrifying neighborhood, they can also be interpreted as a coded effort to make the neighborhood White.

Nanette compares her activated agency and action to that of her neighbors. Her remarks illustrate the experience of being a change agent in a transitional neighborhood.

> **Nanette:** See, I know all the school options available. And I guess that that's because I have always been involved. I think that there are a lot of people who moved into the neighborhood, who really don't get involved and who really truly don't know what their options are or they don't understand that there are truly viable options for schools in this community. They just want to believe maybe what other people tell them or what. Or maybe they just look strictly at the numbers that are released by APS like for testing and things like this. And they don't actually want to visit. I guess they make their own judgments without visiting the school or doing things like that. There is... I know that our neighborhood school has an open door policy. If anyone wants to come in and visit, people are welcome at any time. …I have just always been in the middle of it. So I know all of the school options. I [find out] by going to the school and getting involved. It basically probably started eight years ago or nine years ago when [Jane Doe] started the education committee. So my husband and I started volunteering in the school eight years ago. Way before we had children, just because we knew that we wanted to improve the school and the school needed to turn around just like neighborhood was doing. We do have... there are a lot of options in this immediate area I would say. There are charter schools, there are private schools. There is of course our neighborhood school… I think there are just a lot of people

> who moved to the neighborhood and they don't have children. And immediately when they have children or their children get two or three years old, they think they have move. It's like oh no, we've got to move to the city of Decatur. The schools are not good here, and are the schools as good as they should be or eventually should be? No. But the main thing is that it is going to take us sending our kids there and parental involvement to really get the schools functioning and performing. I guess that I always knew like eight years ago when we first started working on our neighborhood school. I guess that I was hoping, oh gosh, I hope that we improve the school enough so that that way we can actually send our children there 10 years later. And luckily that has happened, and so we are planning on sending our daughter, of course, there in two years….

Nanette reflects on the lack of agency in the neighborhood and how collaboration affects neighborhood change.

> **Nanette:** I wish more people would get involved. It amazes me how people move into the neighborhood. You know 10 or 11 years ago when we moved into the neighborhood, most people got involved because we had to. We had to get involved we had to do things to change the neighborhood and to improve the neighborhood. And I just think that there are a lot of people who moved in, who are just lazy and they expect... is what it is because of the people who moved here 10, 12, 20 years ago. It is all their hard work that makes the neighborhood safe enough and nice enough for people to move into and just people in the last four years. I guess that we are amazed at how some people tend to be apathetic or people just moved in, and they don't want to do anything and expect everything to be done for them. And it doesn't take a lot of effort, but it would just be nice if people would get more involved and realize that if they do, they can really change things just with minimal effort. And it is happening, and it takes a long time to put the school or charter school, but it is happening. Eight years later 10 years later. It is happening.

Bernadette's initiation into the public school system began as an advocate for a neighborhood child. As an outsider, she began to accumulate knowledge to effect change and make decisions for her own family, thus approximating the role of education-insider until she actually assumed that position.

> **Bernadette:** I had a neighbor that was real young and he lived with his great-grandmother. …. So we really bonded with this family and the kid was at the elementary school... [Grandma] she had a sixth grade education, and she was afraid. You know, if you're the teacher, you must know everything and that whatever you say is right. And a lot of things that we were hearing from this kid were not right, so we became advocates for him in his schooling. And so that's really kind of got a foot in the door to see the horrible principal. The horrible way the kids were treated the way the teachers taught the kids, snatched the kids, grabbed the kids and all that kind of stuff. And so I took a job substituting at the school so I could complain about the things that were wrong with the school.

Rosie describes the activation of agency in the broader community as the city rescinded funds from the local swimming pool. Rosie is a long-time resident who practices her citizenship in multiple spheres of the community.

> **Rosie:** We have a public swimming pool in Grant Park that in 2000 and 2002 and 2003 was in real disrepair and myself and another large group of neighborhood residents, about 20 of us, got together and put up a website, Friends of the Grant Park Pool and made a bunch of the neighborhood association meetings and met with the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation. And sort of figured out how to make a public-private partnership, where we could raise extra money for what was a city facility. So that this facility didn't have to close and nor would it get taken over and become some sort of private venture where you would get to swim there, but only if you could afford a membership.

Rosie's approach is pensive and composed through reflection in regard to agency. Her perspective is that, while the neighborhood has successfully enlarged the pool of school options [and filled gaps in community preservation services such as the neighborhood pool restoration], the long-term goal should not be a charter school trajectory through high school because the neighborhood demographics would not support that type of parental involvement. Rosie is insightful in her recognition of the limits of the

neighborhood parents and their realistic ability to maintain high levels of activated agency in the construction and operation of a secondary charter school.

> **Rosie: ...**I think my insight, now that I'm trying to take my insight, now and put it into action over the next, essentially, eight years before my child gets to high school is to try to help focus and direct other neighbors and myself into thinking about high school. And what are legitimate high school options for our kids. And in some ways we tried to do that now, because already the talk in the neighborhood about the high schools is that oh we can't possibly send our kids to Maynard Jackson High School, that Atlanta public high school on Glenwood. I mean, that is just a no good school [sarcasm]...The chitchat and banter… there is a sense among neighborhood residents that, well, what we need to do is start the charter high school. And I am not so sure that that is realistic for a neighborhood of parents, who largely hold jobs. There are some stay-at-home moms, but most households have two working parents. One of them working full-time and the other one working part time, if not full-time. So it is not as if there aren't tons and tons of people who really could spend hours on starting another charter school between the hours of 8:30 and 2:30 every day. So one of my experiences has been that while the elementary charter school has been an overwhelming success, it makes me smile every time I go over there; and while the middle school, I think, will become a success, it is about to be officially merged with the elementary school, so that it is one institution with two campuses. By 2011, it will be officially merged so that it will be one entity that runs the neighborhood charter elementary and the middle school. So that has been really successful, as successful as the charters have been. I am not convinced that this neighborhood could start a charter high school and all the things that a high school we all think about when we think about high school band and lots of choice of what language are in this study and choice of electives and pep rallies and multiple teams to compete on that that is doable for our neighborhood. And I hope that one of the things that we can learn is that just because the elementary and middle school charters have been successful doesn't mean that we can't work with [the public school system] to…. I'm trying to think of the right word…. work with [the public school system] so that we can invest in school so that it can be a true neighborhood school, too.

Rosie's agency aligns with reworking the status quo rather than reinventing the public high school due to the amount of work and involvement necessary to create a charter high school.

> **Rosie:** Well, I am glad you are studying this because I think that it is critical for urban communities to sort of figure these things out. And figure these things out sort of not based on kind of the "I am a Republican" or "I am a Democrat" kind of way. When you are talking about the education of children, you don't vote a party ticket. You try to figure out what's available and what's doable. And this is not a neighborhood that sends a hell of a lot of kids to private schools, because I think most families think, while that's a long road, that's huge tuition bills and logistically is not that easy, because there aren't really any super-duper great private schools real near here. I mean, you're talking about the big commutes and a lot of the reason that people are in town is to not have commutes. But that neighborhood communities need to think critically before, they just sort of give up totally on the local public school system. It is one thing to say, "There was... there literally was a neighborhood school here." When kids started to be born into the neighborhood and needed elementary education, we started the charter school and at the time, the middle school in the neighborhood was not even remotely stable in terms of its leadership or its ability to just be a safe campus during the day. I think that's changing at the public middle school. So it's okay to say, "Well, the next step then is to have a charter middle school" that when you have people thinking about education and investing in education at the elementary level. That means they also have time to think about high school and that you shouldn't just shut the book on the public school system, even if they have been cheating on their tests. You know, that doesn't mean that they have to continue cheating on their tests. Then sometimes, if concerned citizens get involved, maybe there is an incentive not to cheat. That's my two cents.

Joselyn's agency resulted in her employment in various schools as she searched for school options for her pre-K child. Utilizing her position, she was able to weave in and out of multiple elementary schools and gain access to the school climate and tacit knowledge most parents do not know prior to engaging in the school-selection process. She utilized her cultural capital to navigate the schools and find her own place of attachment for her child.

> **Joselyn:** ...You know I actually worked as a ... for the public schools for a few months. And part of the reason that I worked for the public schools is because I was really trying to get [her child] into a different school. And there was, apparently, if you were an employee there, you got preference. So I was looking at ____ Elementary for their schooling experience, but they were apparently filled to capacity by the time that I actually obtained employment with the public schools. But what I did, which is very

> interesting, I spent a lot of time for three months in different neighborhood schools. So I would get cases and several of my cases, interestingly ended up in Toomer Elementary. They were at Toomer Elementary, and so I took extra time at Toomer Elementary. Like, I probably spent two or three weeks at Toomer Elementary when, actually, I could've gotten my cases wrapped up and two weeks. But I was really taking the time to be in the school to be present, to get to know the administrators in the school, to get the classes as I walked past to observe classes for the kids. I actually was evaluating to see what types of teacher-student interactions were taking place. I was really observing if there were discipline problems. All kinds of things like that, because I thought in the back of my head if I enter my child into the preschool, and I knew that Toomer Elementary would be a possibility as far as where she might end up. So that's why I started to feel comfortable with Toomer Elementary for my child for pre-K, because I spent some considerable time in the school as an employee. But I did the same thing with any school that I got an evaluation to go in and do. I just really spent a lot of time in the school, I talked to teachers. And not necessarily about "Oh, I am thinking about sending my kids here," but more so just to see what kind of people they are and are they fair and just towards kids. Are the kids actively engaged and, you know, what's the school climate? So I actually think I had, what many people don't get an opportunity to get -- an insider's view from a real insider's perspective, because I was an employee. I was privy to conversations and information that other folks wouldn't have had access to. But that is how I have really started to think about the public schools in relation to my own children.

Joselyn's agency and school selection process is based on her ability to gain insider information and preference as an employee in the public school system. The activation of high levels of agency as an approach to school selection are present as both individual and group strategies. The collaborative agency of Bernadette and her peers resulted in a pact that may have contributed to demographic changes at Toomer Elementary, including their pro-Toomer Elementary endorsements. The illustrative quotation is lengthy in order to capture the significance of strategy and agency in Bernadette's story, demonstrating the epitome of the power of the collaborative social pact in affecting school change.

> **Bernadette:** I guess what I would like to say is that my friend Jackie and I, Jackie was insistent upon us fixing Toomer Elementary and (2 other women who were part of the Kirkwood school coalition) yes. And I was adamant that I'm not even going to put any energy into the school, and Jackie said, "Let's look at it, let's just look at it for my younger" and so we would go to the park and we would talk about schools and people would say, "You know, if there were enough kids I would do it." So Jackie and I said, "Well, who are you talking about? Are you talking about White kids? "No I'm not talking about White kids." This is what they would say. I would talk about kids from the same economic background and the same value structure. Okay, so how many? How many is enough an across-the-board? It was pretty much eight. "If there were eight other kids, I would feel pretty comfortable with it." So Jackie and I started what we called "The Big Lie". So I said, "Okay. You said you might do it if there were eight. Now you are number one, you're one of eight. No, I'm sorry, Jackie is number one, I am number two, and you're number three. We need five more who are saying, if eight people did it, we will go. So now you are number four, and you over there, you're five." And then we got eight. And then we called everybody back and said now we have 8 people who are going to go, if you actually walk through the doors and they said, "Okay. We'll do it." And I said, then you need to stop saying, "If there is enough people, we'll do it." You're going to say "My kid is going to Toomer Elementary. I am going to do it." And so at the playground, those eight people would talk to people who have kids the same age. Then everybody was like "Where are you going to send your kids to school?" and then the answer is a firm "Oh, I am sending my kid to Toomer Elementary." Until the answer was "Why wouldn't you send your kid to Toomer Elementary?" And that was the change, and the shift. Once we had eight people saying "I am going to do it." Then we started getting those people together to get to know each other better, and those people knew other people and talked them into doing it. So by the time the kids started school, there were, I want to say, there were probably 11 kids that started pre-K altogether. … And of those eight, not all of them were White. So it has not been a racial issue. It's that my kid, regardless of what the rest of the class looks like, my kid will (1) have friends, (2) I know I'll feel comfortable with my kids having playdates, and (3) the kids walking in the kindergarten will feel completely at home because they know these kids already.

Bernadette's response demonstrates a unity among mothers and a powerful collaboration toward the goal of changing the school through the strategy of school selection.

In summary, COLLABORATOR represents the most concentrated levels of activated agency in the variation of responses, where parents gain information and effect change in the structure, protocol and outlook for the neighborhood education options on an individual or collaborative basis. During the interviews, many participants volunteered their strategic processes for acquiring information and activating their agency in the school-selection process, resulting in the hierarchy of activated agency in the categories of description.

In the data analysis, whole scripts were utilized to derive themes and categories of description. By combining the "what" and "how" aspects of school selection, an anatomy of the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process emerged from the data (Table 9).

Table 9

Anatomy of Gentrifiers' School-selection process

Experience	tructural Aspect		Referential Aspect
	External Horizon	Internal Horizon	
Agency	Choice	Forging a path of information	Investment of time, energy and/or money toward seeking best school options or making them happen. Original focus on the community now aimed at schools, coordinates class rosters for pre-kindergarten groups, manages parent playgroups or websites and email. Joins the PTA prior to having children to create a better scenario. Visionary parents who set the tone, protocol, and influence. Collaboration. Mentoring offered.
Social Network	Choice	Levels, forms and influences of communication	Gradually evolving circle that auto-adjusts with each ed. step from daycare to pre-K to K-5 to middle school to high school. Life experiences create strong bond and sense of community for CORE/shakers parent groups in transitional areas. A move further from the core due to F/T work, splits/divisions along the educational trajectory, etc. creates a fragmented social network. Mentoring roles sought, mostly upward. Work colleagues, isolated parents due to work or skills. Working mothers lean toward email, Facebook and texting as methods for daily contact, but school selection conversations were generally face to face.
Social Space	Choice	Obtaining information in certain areas with a proclivity to meet others with same agenda	Construction of the park, parks, playgroups, pools, elementary and middle school charter, preschool cooperatives, school and/or neighborhood meetings, story time, phone, website, email, Facebook, friends, neutral territory of parks. Those not connected to playgroup social space experience everything frequently alone. (But not due to working mothers, etc.)

Social Agenda	Choice	Weighing the individual versus society– division of self	"I don't want my child to be the only one of anything". Schools 'do not meet the criteria', no racial diversity or refusal to speak because of offensive personal views. Practicing privilege of choice, taking social responsibility and investing in the schools and the neighborhood, counter racism, comfort with diversity.
Educational Agenda	Choice	Curriculum	Teachers, direct instruction and its targets, learn versus play, length of school day, testing scandal and issues, districting/zoning, out of date websites/information/ long-term educational planning, lottery of charters, move during pregnancy, before age 4 or before middle school.

Table 9 summarizes the categories of description derived from the data analysis, yielding four sections of detailed description of each category, synthesizing the information from Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The categories of description were derived from repeated analysis of whole scripts from 30 participants. Within each category, commonalities arose from the variations. I utilized lengthy illustrative quotations in the discussion of each category to provide a context to the situation and perspective of participants and systemically support the categories as derived. The categories of description are intended to describe phases, but not essentialize the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers into one category. Their responses have fluidity between categories based on the level of awareness of each theme at the time–context, time and space. The resulting categories displayed a hierarchical trend in the level of activated agency, focal awareness, and reflection in the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers.

Diversity and the Social Agenda

In the data analysis, racial diversity is an embedded theme in the data, manifesting itself in various aspects of school choice, ranging from a deterrent to the public schools to an attraction. Diversity did not appear in the coded hierarchy, but rather presented itself in non-linear ways. As an indirect object of school selection, diversity is referred to as participants' social agenda because it is expressed as a social responsibility and, thus, a social influence. For many participants, the lack of racial diversity in the schools is stated as a concern they have as they approach school choice. The desire for heterogeneity is expressed as a motive for gentrifying and a necessity for the schools, and a commonality in the variation of responses is that parents would like to see racially (and socio-economically) integrated schools, yet not be the first ones or only ones to do so. Three quotations that I utilized in FOLLOWER are repeated in this section regarding diversity, because they represent the overlap in approaches with regard to social agenda.

Juliana illustrates the tone and division in her neighborhood regarding how the market options affect racial diversity.

> **Juliana:** Like if they are a parent, people ask me all the time. "So how is Parkside Elementary like, really?" and I have to look at them like "Have you ever been to Parkside Elementary?" Most peoples' hang-up is the racial thing, and it is what it is, you know. If you just look at it as a racial issue, it's not diverse. But if you look at it just as an individual child issue, I think they do great by the individual children. As a group, it's not super diverse. So when people ask me about it, I am always just kind of thinking like nobody wants to ever really come out and say, "Well, how come there's not more White people there because there is a ton of White people with young kids that live in Grant Park. Why aren't they sending their kids there?" You know, but you have to kind of read in between the lines like, what are they really asking. Why are they asking? There is a lot of that and then I hear parents that I talk to, who are at Neighborhood Charter School and they feel the same way --Neighborhood Charter School is becoming too White. There are very few Black kids in the younger grades over there, and so they are like "Oh, are we making this into the White school for Grant Park?" And this is

> the Black school for Grant Park, I mean more or less. And I know they don't want to be at the White school, but it really, it makes me... and then when Imagine Wesley opened, that's siphoned off even more families. I just wish if everyone in Grant Park went to Parkside Elementary or just the regular public school that was there, they would just be amazing and awesome, but it's like they have the neighborhood divided now…

Lisa's number one priority is diversity. However, her formal school option (Kirkwood) is 85% Black, 12% White, which, in her opinion, lacks diversity. Her expectation was that the racial integration in the neighborhood would bring racial integration in the schools by the time her children enrolled. But, the racial integration of the area schools has not occurred as quickly as the neighborhood expected. She expresses an implicit ideal of a certain kind of integration or diversity in her narrative.

> **Lisa:** Well that's the thing. Everybody's priorities are kind of different. I think all of the school options that we have really different….Everybody's priorities are different and I know, that really the biggest priority for me personally right now is sort of diversification. Like I don't want him to be the only White child in his class, and I also don't want to send him to a school that is all White children, you know? And I think that's what we are kind of looking at right now that there is not -- there isn't much of a diversification, which we knew that when we moved here, but like I was saying at the beginning, I think we all thought that those changes would have happened a little sooner and faster and that we would kind of be more at that point by now than we are.

Juliana comes from a racially diverse upbringing, and her prior experiences frame her aspirations for her children's education.

> **Juliana:** I went to all public schools, and I went to very racially and socio-economically diverse schools, and I went to a predominantly Black high school, but it was very diverse. It was near the university, so a lot of eclectic creative intellectual types... but that is where all my friends come from. So again like trying to re-create that for my kids. I was looking at where is this in Atlanta? … I'm not totally thrilled with the fact that it's

> not as racially diverse. I mean, it's 90% Black - my child is the only White kid in the class. ... I wish there was more racial diversity there. That bothers me. But other than that, it has been a great experience, but I do stress over the fact that they did not make AYP.

Ava chose racial diversity as a priority in the education of her children, so she chose a private school out of the neighborhood.

> **Ava:** ...and I think one thing about The Children's School that we really like is that it has more racial diversity than the charter school does now. So the economic diversity is not very good, but I think I have noticed that the neighborhood charter school over the years has less and less diversity, and that was a priority for us.

Deb presents another perspective where she does not explicitly state race as an issue, so it is subject to interpretation as to why she will not send her children to the public school. In her experiences in the playgroup, she is silent so that her comments do not offend other mothers who are already participating in the school and their choices. Further, she states that she is waiting for potential change in the future.

> **Deb:** I guess I feel really good with the type of people that I have met that live in the neighborhood and that I have met through these times that I've gotten together at [their houses]. I feel like we have a lot in common. We all have kind of similar thoughts and views on our kids, which I really like that, because that is what I really wanted. But on the other hand, when the topic of school comes up I tend to be uncomfortable because I don't..[hesitation] I have very strong opinions on what I think is right for my child. So, I don't like to share too much about how I feel, because I feel like it might be offensive to some people. I tend to just generally be in the conversation, but never get into the specifics. Plus, my child is so little right now. I know that things may change as she gets older and we are faced with having to put her in school, whereas these mothers, a lot of their children are already in school. So, I don't like to say too much about that choice or anything, stuff like that, because I don't want to offend anybody, you know.

Joselyn discusses the racial diversity of the neighborhood schools, adding another dimension of variation to the pool of meaning because her family is African-American. Her perspective and lived experience in school choice reflects a different angle on the diverse, inclusive social experience parent-gentrifiers seek for their children.

> **Joselyn:** ...And I think about demographics -- like for us, one of the main things that we struggle with is that we don't want our kids in an all-White environment and we don't want an all-Black environment, which is why we actually chose the [outside option school], because it is like almost 50-50. And so that's hard because the better schools, the schools like [she lists four] are there up in North Atlanta. And they don't have too many children of color. So we have to take in things into consideration that other people may not have to take into consideration when they are just thinking about the information that they get. So while, you know, if we had the choice to go to [one of those elementary schools], we might not necessarily choose that for a child because it might not be the right racial and ethnic mix that we would want. As far as multiculturalism, Toomer doesn't offer that. So even though I would like to say well, we rate test scores highly and we want our kids to go to schools that have great achievement, that's not necessarily what we would place above making sure that they would have a good kind of social experience as well. We don't want them to be outsiders to the experience.

Rosie describes the efforts of the community to maintain public spaces where social mixing can occur.

> **Rosie: …**And so that pool has now been renovated and restored and enlarged and in the summertime, in particular is a really vibrant place. Not only for I think sort of upper middle class White folks, largely White folks not all who may be moved to the neighborhood in the 90s. But it is truly one of those places that I experienced in Atlanta as being unique in that people of a variety of different classes and of different backgrounds and ethnicities truly play together at the public swimming pool in the summer. And that makes this neighborhood feel great ... So that, I am happy with, actually I am very happy with the social life that my family has, because I don't know that any truly integrated communities are easy to find. But this one is certainly trying... I feel like this community has tried to hold on to the diversities that it does have and has not failed at it. Obviously there is always room for improvement, but I think that between some of the schools, the churches and some of the neighborhood groups like the neighborhood association, Grant Park Conservancy or the Grant Park Parent

> Network and the Friends of the Grant Park Pool, we have been able to hold onto public spaces so that all the city residents of the neighborhood can come together and have good places to be together.

With regard to increasing residential integration and school resegregation, the participants demonstrated a desire for diversity, but reticence at being the minority in any school. Grant Park participants did respond that alternatives to the public school created a division in racial integration, whereas Kirkwood residents expressed fewer concerns over racial diversity and resegregation. Grant Park and Kirkwood demonstrated similarities to the two schools studied by Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) where the levels of collaboration in parents' efforts ranged from strongly individualistic to highly collaborative and those efforts were clustered by school. Grant Park participants have an alternative to the public school and parents express concern about their lottery chance, whereas Kirkwood residents have collaboratively approached change for the benefit of the neighborhood based on the existing school as evidenced by their pre-children PTA participation. While Grant Park parents also collaborated before having children, their efforts focused on the creation of an alternative charter school. Juliana emphasizes this point in her response to the future issue of high school, revealing distaste for the numerous options because it fractured the community and spread the involved parents thinly across the available school choices.

> **Juliana:** But it's like everyone spends so much time. Like what are we to do? What we can do? Like with the high school, you know, I am [close] Maynard Jackson High School. So everyone is like what are we going to do? Should we start a charter high school? I am like if everyone in the neighborhood sent their kids to Maynard Jackson High School; you would have so many involved parents that would be like one hundred kids. If you had 100 9th graders whose parents who were involved, it would be diverse. It would be great for the kids that have parents who are involved.

> It would be great. It could only be positive, and I don't know why people don't want to do that.

Juliana reiterates the sentiment expressed by others that the number of options disperses the potential core of parents interested in integrating the public schools. Diversity did appear as an approach to school selection in the data, but did not correspond to a hierarchical order. Parents expressed a desire for diversity and racial balance in their school selection process.

The Outcome Space of Parent-Gentrifiers' School Selection Experience

The qualitatively different ways parent-gentrifiers experience the school-selection process is answered through the phenomenographic relationship between "What" and "How". The individual interviews were subsequently reviewed iteratively to refine the categories and match categories with interview excerpts. When data analysis reached a point of saturation and no further categories emerged, I organized the outcome space. Selected participant responses are presented to exemplify the variation in responses and the empirical pool of meanings. The following passages from interviews serve as illustrative quotations, representing the variation in the responses. The quotations are intended to show the variation in responses and the subsequent commonalities.

The structure of the outcome space represents the concepts of the lived experience of school selection as a collective experience, or the commonalities in the variation of responses. My presentation of the results did not necessarily parallel the sequence of data analysis in order to enhance readability. Therefore, the structure of the outcome space is

the step prior to the composition of the categories of description. The categories of description represent the hierarchical relationships among concepts, including the structural and referential aspects discussed in this chapter, enriching the structure of the outcome space of parent-gentrifiers' school selection experience (Figure 11).

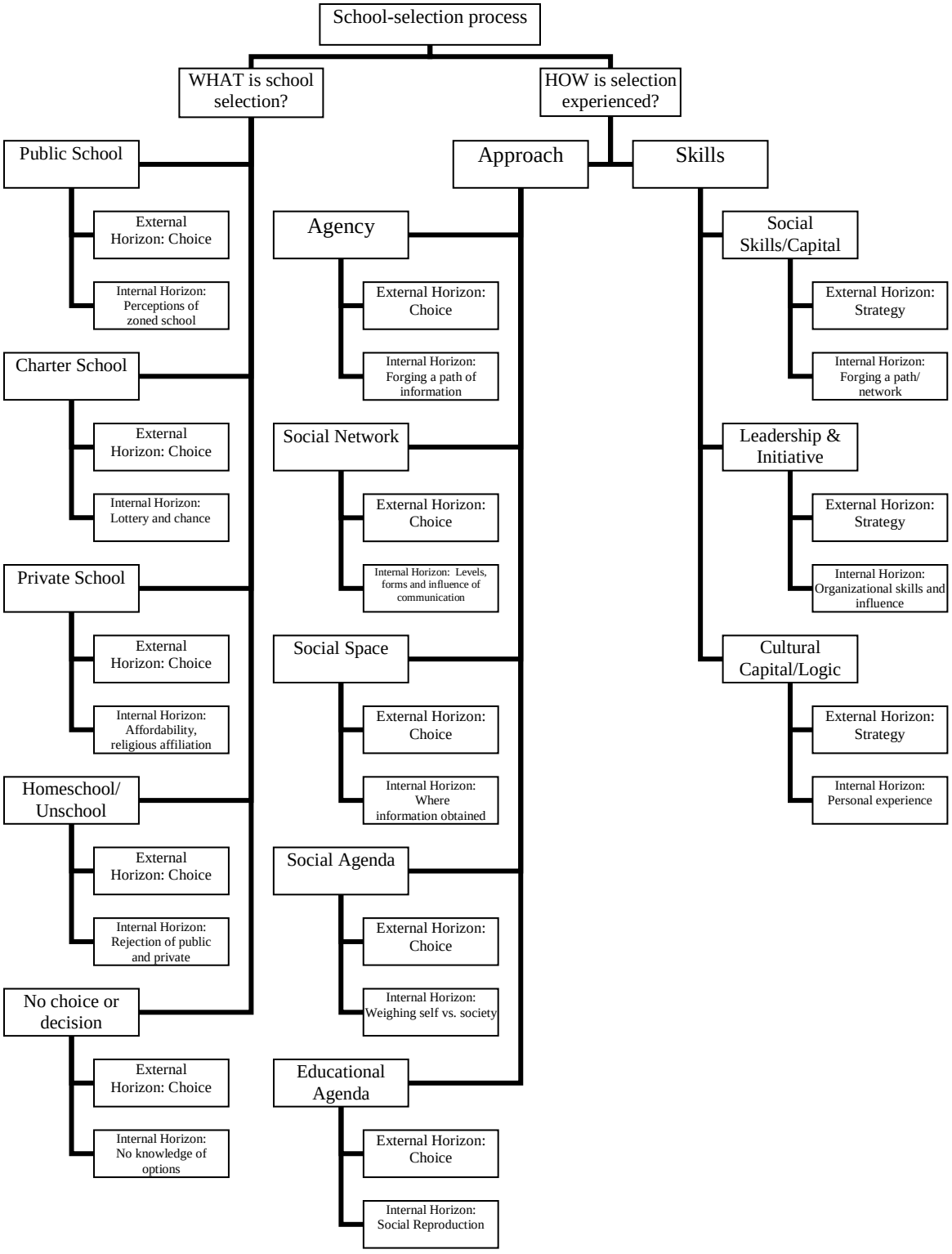

Figure 11. The Outcome Space of Gentrifiers' School Selection Experience.

The structure of the outcome space is flexible and fluid such that it is not a rigid set of steps. Rather the relationships among the approaches of parent-gentrifiers experiencing school selection are subject to time, space, and context in the life-cycle of parent-gentrifiers. For example, if a parent has multiple children, she will most likely escalate or ascend in agency because her knowledge base (cultural capital) and social connections (social capital) will multiply over time. For example, Eliza, Bernadette, Juliana, and Joselyn, chose and maintained different options for their first child than that which they considered for their second child. The outcome space is used to explain the key themes of variation in the lived experience.

The hierarchy of the outcome space reflects an increase in participants' deep responses and reflections. For example, a parent-gentrifier approaching school selection by education agenda and social agenda with surface responses describes a lower level of focal awareness and reflection than a participant using the agency approach. I further identified the skills utilized that were common in participant responses: social to identify the social skills/capital used; leadership and initiative to take action; and their background of cultural capital and cultural logic.

The skills each participant exhibits vary greatly in their combinations. For example, a participant who possesses the skills of leadership/initiative and cultural capital/logic, and approaches school selection with agency, is likely to be a mentor to others who do not possess that combination of approaches and skills. If they also possess social skills, they are likely to collaborate to pursue changes in the neighborhood or school in school selection, such as the charter school formed by parents in Grant Park. Likewise, it is feasible that parent-gentrifiers using multiple approaches to school

selection will reach a deeper perspective and define the lived experience of school selection in more comprehensive ways. For example, the depth and complexity of Rosie's interview reveal multiple approaches used to select schools and a reflection on those approaches. She describes her skills, all five of the approaches, and defines school choice in elevated, multifarious ways.

I conducted the same analysis on all participants where their selection strategies, perception of school choice, and the meaning of school choice were distinguished and categorized for comparison, generating a macro-pattern with variation. A hierarchical structure exists in the outcome space where the emphasis is not on a comprehensive structure, but one that represents the potential use of multiple approaches in the school-selection process. As parents engage in multiple strategies which, themselves, evolve in complexity with respect to social skills, leadership/organizational skills, and cultural knowledge, more intricate, reflective ways of choosing schools emerge.

Conclusion

I presented the analysis of the data in order to substantiate and validate the results. Interview transcripts were systemically coded and categorized using the iterative process fundamental to phenomenography. With each reading, my focal awareness engaged other meanings/approaches within the transcripts and the patterns of commonality that I may not have observed in a previous reading. I derived the categories of description of the outcome space based on phenomenographic methodologies. The outcome space represents multiple combinations of aspects present in the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school selection. Although the outcome space of this research does not yield

a finite set of experiences, phenomenography does assume a finite number of experiences and my study approximates the range of the pool of potential experiences. Research conducted in the same vein is expected to substantiate and contribute to the outcome space that emerged in this study. In the next and final chapter, I provide additional validation of the study based on its connections to the previous literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The intent of the research is to explore the random ways or variation in perception and understanding of the lived experience of school selection for parent-gentrifiers by addressing three focus questions that explore the what and how of those lived experiences. In concluding the research, I will recapitulate and discuss the findings, provide a critique of the study and its implications for multi-disciplinary research, and make suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

My research explores the lived experiences of parent-gentrifiers in Atlanta, Georgia. The use of phenomenography was an iterative data analysis to produce four categories with the deliberation of five key themes of variation: agency, social network, social space (place-making), social agenda (with respect to diversity), and educational agenda. I reviewed data further for a relationship between school information, school choice, and the influence of social networks on school choice. Likewise, I analyzed the strategies employed by parents in their search for school options and their social networking activities. The relationships between variations and levels of complexity found in the study form a scaffold for the role of the lived experience of school selection for parent-gentrifiers.

Summary of the Findings and Connection to the Literature

Data responses regarding the "What" and "How" of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process are derived from the phenomenographic interviews. Four categories of description and five themes of agency, social networks, social space, social responsibility, and educational agenda, emerged from the data. Participants described strategies for selecting schools that included activating agency, social networking, place-making in the social space, social agenda, and educational agenda. A hierarchy of the social versus individual evolved in the categories of description of the experience of selecting schools, consistent with DeSena's (2009) research that parents will espouse a politically progressive ideology, yet act in their own self-interest, caught in the duality of self (Nagel, 1991). The first levels, LONER and FOLLOWER maintained a focus on individual interests and a lack of agency or knowledge whereas SEARCHER and COLLABORATOR reflected more concern about the community and social responsibility to all children with the ability to activate agency as necessary. The development of this hierarchy supports DeSena (2009) and Schneider and Buckley (2002) where the social agenda takes a back seat to individual benefits.

As parent-gentrifiers experience encounters with the phenomenon of school selection, their focal awareness changes from the in-town neighborhood to in-town education. A sample size of 30 presents an opportunity to see the variation in responses and approximate the finite number of ways parent-gentrifiers experience school selection. The outcome space does not represent the finite set of attributes of the school selection experience, but contributes to a substantial pool of meaning of the collective lived experience of parent-gentrifiers in the school selection process.

The data analysis for the "What" aspect of school selection produced five options of school choice and five forms of communication. The five school choice options were consistent with the previous research (DeSena, 2009; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000), whereas the five forms of communication were not previously researched with regard to the topic of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process. The final research question was addressed by developing the schematic to qualitatively explain the "what" and "how" of school selection. Categories of Description (Table 8), the Anatomy of Gentrifiers' School-selection process (Table 9), and the Outcome Space of Gentrifiers' School Selection Experience (Figure 10) provide the complex description of ways parent-gentrifiers lived the experience of the school-selection process.

School selection involves formal or informal choice. Choice manifested itself in this study not only with regard to what school, but also with the opportunity to activate agency and leadership in the process of school selection as parents actively engaged. In the previous literature, choice manifests in the forms of economic, social, and cultural capital resources. One way to increase equitable access to information is through the publication of a common core of school options. For example, if the education agenda items regarding formal and informal school options in a neighborhood, school day schedule, curriculum taught, instructional methods, and teacher ratings/reviews were presented via a website or information brochure, it would provide a base knowledge and cultural capital to residents, foster technological connections, or channel the time parents spend gain such information into opportunities in which they activate their agency. Parents of higher educational attainment are more proficient at networking to find the

shortcuts to this information (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000). Many parents did use the website greatschools.org for information, and greatschools.org publishes an annual of school choice information for select cities but not Atlanta. A collection and distribution of such information would enable cross-class shortcuts to guide the school-selection process.

Racial diversity was an embedded theme in the results. Parent-gentrifiers' school choice and residential location demonstrates that 10/14 or 71% of Grant Park participants were oriented toward the Neighborhood Charter School, pending lottery results. In contrast, 9/16 or 56% of Kirkwood parents were thinking about the public school; 3/16 or 19% had utilized both public and private simultaneously; and 4/16 or 25% were considering private or charter out of the neighborhood. The ideal of where participants stated they would send their children conflicted with the actual preferences they expressed in the interviews. Kirkwood parents expressed an appreciation for diversity and support of the public school in concept, but when their preferences were tallied from 16 interviews, the public school captured little more than half of its zoned attendance area. The conflict between statement and selection behavior is consistent with Schneider and Buckley's (2002) research on parents' actions that contradict the priorities they express for their children's education, and how they guide them. (DeSena, 2009) argues the same conflict between liberal ideology and actual school selection outcomes in her ethnographic study on Greenpoint.

Likewise, Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) found that levels of collaboration and community effort focused on all children breed long-term success as opposed to efforts focused on individual benefit that fail to bring about long-term change in urban schools.

Grant Park formed a charter school that has successfully attracted the neighborhood students, but left the public school racially segregated. DeSena (2009) refers this as "parallel play" where the neighborhood racially stratifies by school attendance (p. 6). Kirkwood, in an earlier phase of gentrification, is able to attract 9 of 16 of the participants into the public school and has a 10% increase in White students, an increase in racial integration. The effect of participants' school choice on both neighborhoods results in two very different scenarios: Grant Park with a majority Black public school and a majority White charter school; and Kirkwood, with one integrating public school. The more gentrified neighborhood provides an option-demand system, resulting in two racially segregated schools, supporting the notion that gentrification contributes to racial segregation in education (DeSena, 2009).

Parents and their social networks from the two neighborhoods operated in different ways toward similar goals. For example, Grant Park is a neighborhood previously zoned into five different schools and did not correspond to a single public school whereas Kirkwood did. When a new elementary school was built in Grant Park, the public school district did not zone the school to cover the entire community. Depending on where one lived in Grant Park, one's child could be zoned into one of five different schools, though the area of the neighborhood is only two square miles. Therefore, when the Neighborhood Charter School opened in 2002 just one mile away from the new public elementary school, parents chose to enter the lottery and send their children to the Neighborhood Charter School, maintaining a community attachment. Their choice left a gap in the expected and actual enrollment for Parkside Elementary School. Atlanta Public Schools originally excluded 75% of the Grant Park community in

the Parkside attendance zone. "The proposed zone only went as far as Confederate Avenue, effectively eliminating about 75% of the Grant Park neighborhood from its attendance zone, and most of the parents involved in the initial school effort," (Hankins, 2004, p. 230). The current Parkside Elementary Attendance zone includes approximately 75% of the Grant Park community, based on Atlanta Public Schools' (n.d.) map.

In contrast, the parents in Kirkwood had physical boundaries that matched their community space. While the Grant Park parents operated in different spheres due to the fractioning of the neighborhood, Kirkwood had one neighborhood elementary school serving all students within its boundaries. In 2010-2011, Atlanta Public Schools combined Kirkwood's lottery pre-Kindergarten class with another, more affluent neighborhood's pre-K for the next school year. The next year, the affluent school's children were to return to Mary Lin for kindergarten, leaving Kirkwood with a reduced class size and parents without a reason to attach or participate in place-making activities because they will not attend Toomer in grades 1-5. If the lottery only placed Kirkwood students in Toomer Elementary, the school would have been able to retain a full pre-Kindergarten class for the next year and cultivate parent-school relationships.

Finding #1

Atlanta Public Schools created instability by creating flux in the neighborhood through zoning and moving the site of educational programs such as Mary Lin's Pre-K program (not in reference to the Neighborhood Charter School). In both Kirkwood and Grant Park, the school district did not provide opportunities for parents to attach at early phases, due to the constant rezoning and the instability of the location of programs. In

addition, the testing scandal created discomfort in the longevity of their school options. Parents expressed a desire to know that the choice they make will still be a viable choice for their child in subsequent years, specifically as they make transitions into middle and high school.

Finding #2

Social space played a significant role to the social networking and place-attachment of parent-gentrifiers. The typical homes were Victorian and Craftsman bungalows, so there was not enough space to host playgroups. Parents in the gentrifying neighborhoods faced playgroups of up to 50 children, which could only meet on nice days at the park or playground. Schools could provide a social space for new parents/playgroups from the beginning to foster place-attachment. Parents look for physical space to convert into social space for playgroups and meetings. If schools open up a classroom or the gym, etc. to parents in the neighborhood, those stable relationships and familiarity would already be in place when school selection came to the forefront. Further, stable relationships with the school space, the school, and other parents decrease student attrition (ABT Associates, Inc., 2003). Walker (2010) found that the parental choice process began long before mandatory/statutory education in the United Kingdom. Foresight and strategic planning could establish the public school as a neighborhood social space long before the school-selection process begins or before they seek a charter. Primary schools that established nursery provisions were able to retain the children when they turned five and were old enough for kindergarten (Walker, 2010; See also Maguire et al., 2001). Neighborhood schools could recreate their role through such place-

attachment strategies to be a pillar of the community. Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) find that a collective orientation to parent involvement benefits all children in the school, and that is what occurred in Kirkwood. Due to their lack of options, Kirkwood parents united via the playgroups to transform the school into a place they would want to send their children. In contrast, Grant Park parents had at least two options that divided the collective abilities of the community from the beginning, spreading the parent resources thin and resulting in the dichotomous social spaces of the Neighborhood Charter School or Parkside Elementary where place-attachment would occur.

Finding #3

Social networks were essential to the formation of cultural capital with parent-gentrifiers. Participants discussed school options with their peers, beginning with playgroups, as addressed in Finding #2 where social networks formed through community activities and playgroups. Moreover, they utilized the education level and cultural capital in the form of credentials to evaluate and filter that cross-talk. This finding is consistent with the previous literature (André-Bechely, 2005a, 2005b; Ball, 2003, 2005; DeSena, 2006; 2009; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall; 2000). The levels of activated agency and collaboration within those social networks influenced the place-making activities in both neighborhoods. One result of place-making was two racially homogenous schools and one integrating school. During the data analysis, I realized a distinction in group strategies (Table 10) where the evolution of the social network or lack thereof, affects the strategies and approaches of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process.

Table 10

Grouped School Selection Strategies

Type	Description
FADERS or Movers - operate on the margins of the social network of the neighborhood. Their indecision or lack of cohesion does not provide stable parent support or involvement. This is the group that must be 'caught' by the school system.	Individual choices and situations begin to segregate participants from the neighborhood peer group by the following referential aspects a. work schedules–parents did not have flexible full time employment as peer group, some did not work and peers did b. peer/social network divisions, beginning with playgroup cliques c. pre-school choices d. elementary school choices e. long-term divisions based on thoughts regarding middle school and high school - this group is not easily influenced in their thought process -this group expressed concern about the testing scandal -this group operates at the individual, isolated level leaving it with: a. low number of reliable sources b. lower number of resources c. research is conducted via the internet d. selection statements include unschool, homeschool, and no selection process
CORE or Shakers - essential to the stability of the neighborhood	Group/Social Network a. work schedules similar to peer group, flexible schedules or stay at home b. united from the beginning/united front c. face challenges as a group d. agency derives from strength in numbers as well as individual leadership e. follow similar educational trajectories for their children f. influenced by peer decisions/choices g. they bring many resources including their time and education to the table, perceived as sources of highly reliable information to peers h. not fazed by testing issues/scandal due to their agency i. know their options, have been to the school, served on the PTA before having children

I refer to the grouped selection strategies as FADERS/Movers and CORE/Shakers, which I later discovered to be sociological terms used to describe the structure of community power (Trounstine & Christensen, 1982). Whereas the movers and shakers in Trounstine and Christensen (1982) refer to the powerful and influential members of a community, I utilize the terms to describe the group strategies of two groups in a neighborhood. In my research, FADERS/Movers demonstrated a lack of commitment to the neighborhood and community. Unless something really changed, they would potentially move or fade out of the neighborhood. In contrast, the CORE/Shakers were committed to making change happen in the neighborhood and schools without discussing the possibility of exiting the neighborhood. They were active parent-citizens. The variation in responses produced a description of whom the public school systems may focus on and capture in order to increase neighborhood stability–the FADERS/Movers. Grouped selection strategy themes are distinctly present, but not dichotomous, representing a continuum of the grouped selection approach of parent-gentrifiers as they employ skills and activities in the school-selection process.

Finding #4

The forms of communication most favored by the participants reflected their time and involvement in the community. The parents who had flexible schedules or did not work outside of the home did not use electronic communication such as texting and email to the extent of those who worked full time. Further, Facebook was utilized most often in the situation of participants who worked full-time and wanted to maintain social

connections in the educational trajectory of their child. The rejection of Facebook and email as forms of correspondence in favor of telephones and personal contact could signify a rejection of the global in favor of place where personalized interaction reigns. In other words, participants want to personalize their form of communication when the conversation centers on school options.

Finding #5

Parent-gentrifiers expressed a desire for racially and socially integrated schools and neighborhoods. Parents sought racial diversity in schools and straddled Nagel's (1991) moral dilemma in their school-selection process. They did not want exclusively White schools but extremes in the racial composition of their options created choices that resulted in segregation.

To verify the data results against actual demographics, I looked at change in three years of student demographics for Parkside Elementary, Neighborhood Charter School, and Toomer Elementary. Parkside Elementary School, with a population of 503 students, experienced a 1% decrease in Black students and a 2% increase in White students [to 6% White overall] from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010, with a 3% increase in economic disadvantage. Neighborhood Charter School, with a population of 348 students, experienced a 10% decrease in Black students and a 9% increase in White students [to 62% White overall] from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010, with a 9% increase in economic disadvantage. Toomer Elementary School, with a population of 170 students, experienced a 9% decrease in Black students and a 10% increase in White students [to 12% White] from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010, with an 11% decrease in economic

disadvantage (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). The trends in the past 3 years are toward an increasingly White majority school at Neighborhood Charter, a relatively stable Black majority population at Parkside Elementary, and an integrating White population in Toomer. Kirkwood was a 64% majority Black neighborhood (CityData, 2011a) and a larger portion of the participants chose the neighborhood school [Toomer]. In contrast, Grant Park is a majority White neighborhood (CityData, 2011b) with two racially separate schools. A majority of Grant Park participants enrolled in the majority White Neighborhood Charter School.

Schneider and Buckley (2002) found middle-class parents consider student demographics to be a prime factor in the school-selection process. The participants in this study expressed the desire for diversity, but in an option-demand scenario, their school choice preferences did not necessarily conform. DeSena (2009) found that gentrification results in segregation, and the parent-gentrifiers of the more gentrified neighborhood, Grant Park, did express this variation with regard to their option-demand system of education and choice. However, where no formal alternative school option existed, more research participants integrated their children in the public school, rejecting DeSena's (2009) generalization that parent-gentrifiers reject the public schools, and supporting Hoxby's (1994) finding that more school options have a small effect on ethnic and socioeconomic segregation.

Finding #6

I approached this research without consideration for the feminist approach considered in previous research in order to remain unbiased and to bracket my own

experience as a parent-gentrifier /mother-gentrifier. Previous literature argued that school selection was highly gendered activity in which mothers primarily engaged (Brantlinger, 2003; DeSena, 2006, 2009; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998a). Diane Reay (1998a) used a critical lens to examine the mothering practices and parental involvement. Dorothy Smith was a pioneer in conceptualizing mothers' educational involvement as unpaid work (Reay, 1998, p. 8). Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith (2005) describe the "discourse of mothering" as the semantics that establish rapport within the circle of mothers (p. 31). Finally, Ellen Brantlinger (2003) explored the middle class and social inequality through school choice and parental involvement via mothers. In summary, these authors contributed greatly to the topic of the middle-class educational strategies where mothers and mothering discourse are significant to the social network or grapevine that influences the network and the genderization of the previous literature.

With respect to my research, mothers were not targeted as participants. My research flyer was posted on the Grant Park Parent Network website as well as the Kirkwood Library. In the park, I spoke with many couples where the men deferred the conversation to their spouses. All respondents were female. The one male who met the screening criteria had his wife call in response. In all mixed gender couples, the male worked full time out of the home, and the female may have worked (See Table 2). I did have a small number of single mothers whom all worked full-time. The lack of male involvement in my study may support the previous literature, but the previous literature found school selection and parent involvement to be highly gendered research activities in which mothers engaged (Ball, 2003, 2006; Brantlinger, 2003; DeSena, 2006, 2009;

Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998). Further research regarding the role of males in school selection may contribute a different perspective to school selection activity in the literature, including Reay, Crozier, and James' (2011) recent effort to provide equitable representation through sampling strategies that included equal gender representation among participants.

Finding #7

In reviewing the literature and making connections, I realized an alternative explanation for the variation in responses between Kirkwood and Grant Park. Kirkwood was a neighborhood in an earlier stage of transition, yielding lower home prices than Grant Park, and, thus, a lower initial neighborhood economic investment than Grant Park. Previous research correlates mother's education as the highest predictor of choosing an alternative to the attendance-zoned school such that "When a child's mother has more education, she appears to be more willing to search out the best educational alternative for her children, and she is more able to seek out alternatives to neighborhood schools" (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002, p. 34). Further, higher levels of parental education make one more likely to expect their children to attend college, be more helpful with homework, and have higher levels of parental involvement.

With this in mind, Kirkwood parents may not have had a similar habitus or cultural capital as Grant Park parents. Perhaps the variation between neighborhoods was not based on the level of gentrification, but the educational and socioeconomic caliber of parent occupying the respective neighborhoods, where their socioeconomic status correlates to a different habitus where "even if extensive school choice is available and

parents have the money, time, and information to exercise choice, they may still not become choosers. They will remain nonchoosers because their way of looking at the world (their habitus) precludes them from seeing that school choice is an avenue open to them, and because their cultural capital does not include skills necessary to make choices among schools" (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002, pp. 37-38). The fact that many Kirkwood parents were oriented toward the neighborhood public school does not signify that they are nonchoosers. Their lived experiences proved quite contrary. Their habitus and cultural capital may differ from that of Grant Park parents or their lack of formal options may instigate their choice and actions.

Reay, Crozier, and James (2011) argue that the new middle-class is far from homogenous (p. 30), and their school selection process is intertwined with family habitus, acting as a strategy to avoid or recreate previous experiences. I attribute the different approaches to school selection to the type of gentrifier based on the wave of gentrification. For example, Hackworth and Smith's (2001) model entails the phases of gentrification as first wave, second wave, and third wave. In addition to Hackworth and Smith's (2001) model, Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) discuss fourth wave gentrification and super-gentrification as models of increasingly concentrated wealth in urban areas. Super-gentrification involves the social replacement of the ordinary middle classes existing in a gentrified neighborhood by those with more economic resources and investments (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Butler and Lees (2006) extend on the distinct phases of the model to describe the respective type of gentrifier involved as having more economic capital and higher consumption demands with each advancing level. Within the heterogeneous levels of gentrification, the habitus, forms of capital, and consumption

demands will also vary, potentially affecting their qualitative and quantitative contribution of skills, approaches, and meanings to the school-selection process.

Finding #8

A hierarchy emerged in the category of descriptions that I attribute to time, context, and space in the life trajectory of participants. Parents of multiple children would have had previous experience with the school-selection process during the interview process. Further, they potentially would have more extensive and established social networks, resulting in a different layer of focal awareness.

Critique of the Study

I return to some of the limitations previously discussed in Chapter 4. The data analysis was conducted by one researcher, and group collaboration may have led my research to an expanded level of understanding or outcome space. In addition, the nature of the research called for purposive and maximized variation sampling, yet such sampling may drive narrow results.

My research focused on the experience of the school-selection process for gentrifying parents but did not look into the schools' perspectives as social spaces nor did I conduct school-based inquiry. The screening tool did not delimit participants with children over the age of 5 who have already experienced the school-selection process or those who have made a decision via a feeder pre-school, thus eliminating the enigma or lack of knowledge/experience surrounding the school selection experience. Future research in this vein would do better to cap the oldest child at pre-K. However, parents

of children under three year of age would not necessarily have provided a representative sample group based on the amount of time between the research interviews and actual enrollment in Kindergarten. Although I declare the aforementioned "limitations", the contribution of these variations in context and situation contributed to rich data sources.

A further limitation is the lack of generalizability of this research. Only collective generalizations, based on the commonalities in categories of description, will be made. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert "naturalistic generalization" to be the best way for people to understand information–the way they would experience it- "intuitive, empirical, based on personal direct and vicarious experience" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120). This empirical research is based on personal experiences in a small, context-laden situation and is, therefore, not necessarily replicable or generalizable because the limitations of qualitative research prevent generalization from one study to another. The participants' descriptions represent one moment in time, but the sample size of 30 approximates the finite number of potential lived experiences. For example, at another point in time, a parent-gentrifier's response may be categorized as FOLLOWER or SEARCHER in lieu of COLLABORATOR, depending on the evolution or their social network or activation of agency. The framework is intended to explain the common levels of lived experience a parent-gentrifier may encounter in a similar group.

Implications for Educational Research

On a grand scale, school districts must consider community cohesion when creating district attendance zones. The situation in Grant Park may have had a very different outcome with regard to the neighborhood support for the Neighborhood Charter

School versus Parkside Elementary School. Differences in the district's approach from Grant Park to Kirkwood are clear. The Parkside Elementary attendance zone cut through the community and was later altered to include 75% of the community. As parents faced multiple schools in one community, they organized their efforts to create a satisfactory alternative to the formal school options. Within a year of renovating Parkside Elementary, Atlanta Public Schools also granted a charter to the neighborhoods of Grant Park and Ormewood Park for the Neighborhood Charter School. The Kirkwood neighborhood continues to be zoned for one neighborhood school, Toomer Elementary. The neoliberal market opened up options of choice and opportunities effect change in the educational system through creating choice.

Under a neoliberal market of choice, an important element to the success of urban school districts is their marketing strategy. Urban cities offer multiple school choice options, depending on one's desired commute and financial capacity. Cultivating the next generation of potential students depends on reputation and image. During the time I collected data in 2010, Atlanta Public Schools faced multiple charges of cheating on the standardized tests that meet federal guidelines for Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind of 2000. Further, Atlanta Public Schools has claimed significant progress under its own educational reforms based on those standardized test scores. The resulting probation status has parents concerned because the allegations were confirmed in 2011. Should Atlanta Public Schools lose accreditation, 55,000 students stand to graduate from unaccredited institutions, leaving them potentially unable to attend the higher education institution of their choice or not be eligible for financial aid through the HOPE scholarship if they are unable to score 85% or above on the ACT or SAT in

addition to their 3.0 GPA (GAcollege411, n.d.). In a Georgia metropolitan school district, that is a heavy consequence for all to bear.

Parents of potential students are concerned about the overall quality of education their children would obtain in public school systems, as demonstrated by the participants. They want access to updated information that provides information to guide their decisions. When that access is not available, their default source of information comes through their social network contacts. School districts may counter the "chit-chat and banter" (Rosie) by focusing on customer-service, marketing, and social space for place-attachment and the activation of agency as opposed to the impenetrable institutions of the past.

District reputation and integrity are essential to parents in gentrifying neighborhoods. Parent-gentrifiers have a voice and make a choice in their children's education. School districts across the country should analyze the changing demographics of the populations they serve and anticipate changes in the size and needs of those populations with specific regard to the zoning and closing of schools. Likewise, urban planning policy should consider the significant role of school districts with respect to their target consumer as they plan corporate-financed urban communities and villages in the third and fourth waves of gentrification.

Suggestions for Future Research

While concluding this study, I realized several potential topics and approaches for future research. Future research on the place-making activities in schools, and how the neighborhood school paradigm is framed as a rejection of global space in favor of a

personalized place would contribute to a multi-disciplinary literature. As we reject the global in favor of the local, do neighborhood schools gain more appeal? Is parental involvement a form of effort to put in the sweat equity to make the local more appealing and unique? What happens to public schools in gentrifying neighborhoods? A longitudinal study of parent-gentrifiers' place-making activities in urban schools would provide information regarding their long-term impact.

Other questions include a district- and school-based inquiry on how schools build communities in transitional areas including how they address zoning and redistricting to maintain communities as well as the transformation of the populations they serve. Likewise, longitudinal studies regarding the outcomes of parent-gentrifiers school selection, and how parent-gentrifiers make the neighborhood transitions to middle school and high school would provide additional information regarding parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process and the effects of their selection. As time goes on, the future direction of gentrification and, thus, parent-gentrifiers is uncertain.

A double dip recession could increase gentrification through large waves of foreclosures (Atkinson, 2008), but banks may raise the prerequisites for residential loans, creating additional hurdles for those seeking an urban homestead. In addition, the New Great Migration is creating an influx of middle-class Blacks to the South, including Atlanta (Bilefsky, 2011; Frey, 2004). These emigrants from the Northeast may settle in urban Atlanta, creating a middle-class racial diversity desired by participants. Future research could illuminate relationships to current changes in the racial composition of the urban middle class in Atlanta and the impact on the racial composition of urban schools.

Although the outcome space and categories of description represent the various ways the collective group in the study experienced school selection, I take the opportunity to reassess the approaches, skills and meaning derived from the data analysis of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process.

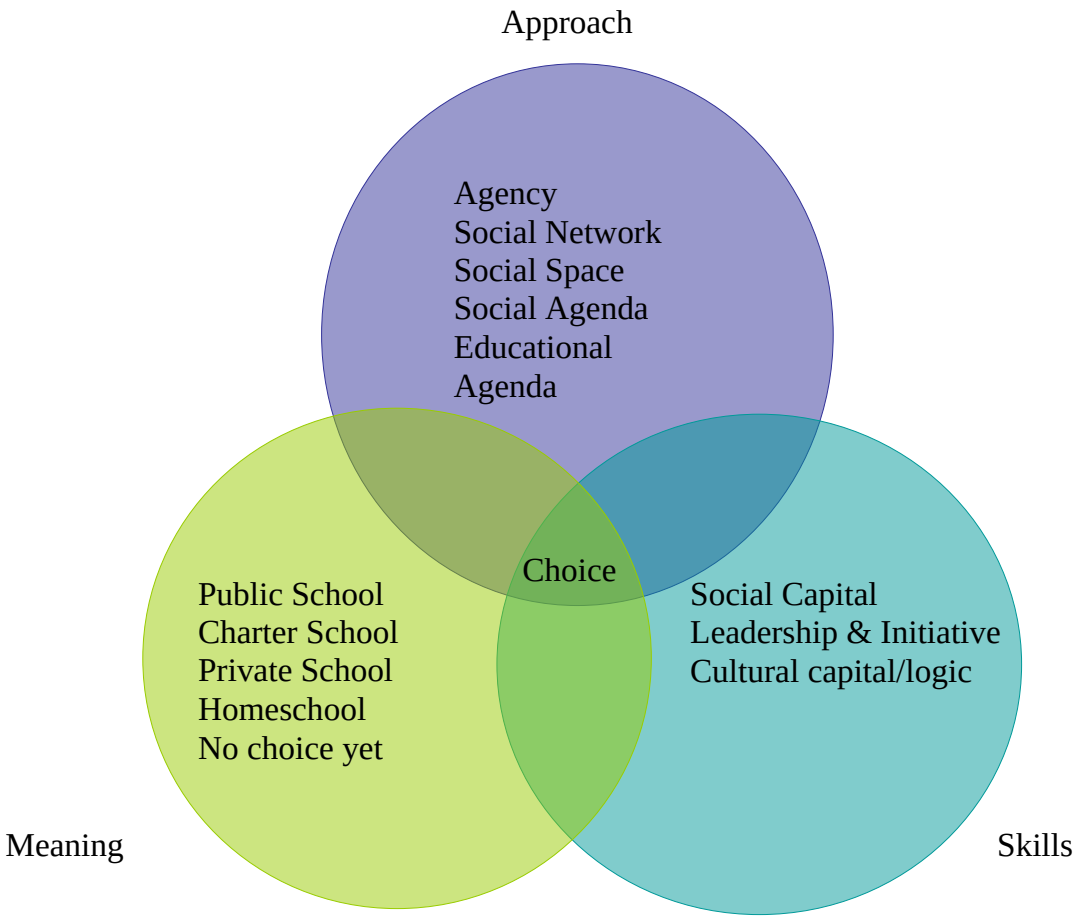

Figure 12. Relationships of the aspects of parent-gentrifiers' school-selection process

The diagram is based on data analysis and represents the various aspects that are collectively incorporated in the ways school selection was experienced by the participant group (Figure 12). In summary, the variables of approaches, skills and meaning as well as their various combinations may provide a foundation for future research.

Final Words

It is with great anticipation that this study will be perceived as a valuable contribution by the research community through its methodologically anchored research in the cross-disciplinary study of gentrification and school choice. The completion of this research denotes my strong desire to forge a path into the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers' school selection process because good neighborhood schools are key to the sustained, longitudinal revitalization of urban areas (ABT, Inc., 2003; Butler, with Robson, 2003; Robson & Butler, 2001). I consider this research the beginning of many contributions to understanding the intricacies of urban schools and the neighborhoods they serve under a neoliberal agenda. Further, may this research contribute in such a way that others are inspired and encouraged to augment the literature regarding the place-making strategies of parent-gentrifiers and urban school improvement in the school-selection process, yielding educational and urban planning policies that support the contexts for all to live a mutually equitable existence.

References

Abbas, S., Pouwelse, J., Epema, D., & Sips, H. (2009, Summer). *A gossip-based distributed social networking system*. Paper presented at the 18th IEEE International Workshops on Enabling Technologies: Infrastructures for Collaborative Enterprises, Groningen, The Netherlands. Retrieved on December 16, 2009 from http://www.computer.org/portal/web/csdl/doi/10.1109/WETICE.2009.30

ABT Associates, Inc. (2003). *Case studies exploring the potential relationship between schools and neighborhood revitalization.* (MOBIS contract # GS10F-0086K). Cambridge, MA: J. Khadduri, J. Turnham, A. Chase, H. Schwartz

Aka, E. (2010). Gentrification and Socioeconomic Impacts of Neighborhood Integration and Diversification in Atlanta, Georgia. *National Social Science Journal 35(1).* Retrieved October 10, 2011 from http://nssa.us/journals/2010-35-1/2010-35-1-01.htm

Akerlind, G. (2005a). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 24(4), 321-334.

Akerlind, G. (2005b). Learning about phenomenography: Interviewing, data analysis, and the qualitative research program. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved on November 19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

André-Bechely, L. (2005a). *Could it be otherwise? Parents and the inequities of school choice.* New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

André-Bechely, L. (2005b). Public school choice at the intersection of voluntary integration and not-so-good neighborhood schools: Lessons from parents' experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41,* 267-305.

Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Corporation, 429 U.S. 252 (1977).

Atkinson, R. (2008). Commentary: Gentrification, segregation and the vocabulary of affluent residential choice. *Urban Studies, 45*(12), 2626-2636. Downloaded on June 19, 2011 from http://usj.sagepub.com/content/45/12/2626.

Atlanta City Council. (2001, September). *A city for all. Report of the gentrification task force.* Retrieved August 2, 2009 from http://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/2001/IMAGES/Adopted/1119/01R2013.pdf

Atlanta Public Schools. (2004, May). APS Superintendent Backs North Side Recruiting Recommendations. Press Release. Retrieved on July 5, 2005 from http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/news/PressRel/PressRel2004/05may2004/052104.html

Atlanta Public Schools. (2006). *Atlanta Public Schools System-Wide Demographic Study*. Retrieved November 13, 2006 from http://aps.schoolwires.net/1861101118113928800/lib/1861101118113928800/Demographics2006.pdf

Atlanta Public Schools (n.d.b). How are school zones determined? Retrieved September 1, 2011 from http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/domain/108.

Atlanta Public Schools (n.d.c). Proof of residency charts. Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/Page/832.

Atlanta Public Schools System Task Force on Recruitment and Retention. (2004, May). Report of Recommendations North Corridor. (Available from the Atlanta Public School System, Research and Accountability, 130 Trinity Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia, 30303).

Ball, S. (2003). *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage.* New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Ball, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Ball, S., Bowe, R., & Gerwitz, S. (1995). Circuits of schooling: A sociological exploration of parental choice of school in social class contexts. *The Sociological Review, 43*(1), 52-78. In S. Ball (Ed.), *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Ball, S., & Vincent, C. (1998). 'I heard it on the grapevine': Hot knowledge and school choice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 19*(3), 377-400. In S. Ball (Ed.), *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Ball, S., & Vincent, C. (2007). Education, class fractions and the local rules of spatial relations. *Urban Studies, 44*(7), 1175-1189. Retrieved on June 29, 2011 from http://usj.sagepub.com/content/44/7/1175

Barnacle, R. (2005). Interpreting interpretation: A phenomenological perspective on phenomenography. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved on November

19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

Beck, J. (2007). Education and the middle classes: Against reductionism in educational theory and research. *British Journal of Educational Studies 55*(1), 37-55.

Betancur, J. (2002). The politics of gentrification: The case of West Town in Chicago. *Urban Affairs Review, 37,* 780-814.

Bilefsky, D. (2011). Seeking new life, New York Blacks heed South's tug. *The New York Times*. Vol. CLX, No. 55,444, Wednesday, June 22, 2011, p. A1, A193.

Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell, 498 U.S. 237 (1991).

Bodovski, K. & Farkas, G. (2008). 'Concerted cultivation' and unequal achievement in elementary school. *Social Science Research, 37*, 903-919.

Boger, J., & Orfield. G. (Eds). (2005). *School resegregation: Must the south turn back?* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC.

Booth, S. (2008). *Researching learning in networked learning: Phenomenography and variation theory as empirical and theoretical approaches.* Paper presented at 6th International Conference on Networked Learning. Halkidiki, Greece.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice.* (R. Nice, Trans.). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1972).

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste.* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979).

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In S. Ball (Ed.), *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Sociology of Education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory 7*(1), 14-25.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words: Essays toward a reflexive sociology.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural reproduction*. (R. Johnson, Ed.) New York: Columbia University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Boltanski, L. (2000). Changes in the social structure and changes in the demand for education. In S. Ball (Ed.), *Sociology of Education: Major Themes.* Volume 2. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (2000). *Reproduction in education, society and culture.* (R. Nice, Trans.). (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (Original work published 1970).

Bowden, J. (2005). Reflections on the phenomenographic team process. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved on November 19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

Bowden, J., & Green, P. (Eds). (2005). *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved November 19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13(1), article 11. Retrieved December 16, 2009 from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/Boyd.ellison.html

Brantlinger, E. (2003). *Dividing classes: How the middle class negotiates and rationalizes school advantage.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Bridge, G. (2006). It's not just a question of taste: Gentrification, the neighbourhood and cultural capital. *Environment and Planning A, 38,* 1965-1978.

Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (Brown I).

Butler, T. (1997). *Gentrification and the middle classes.* Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Butler, T. (2003). Living in the bubble: Gentrification and its 'others' in North London. *Urban Studies*, *40,* 2469-2486.

Butler, T., & Hamnett, C. (2007). The geography of education: Introduction. *Urban Studies, 44,* 1161-1174.

Butler, T., & Lees, L. (2006). Supergentrification in Barnsbury, London: Globalisation and gentrifying global elites at the neighbourhood level. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 31*(4), 467-487.

Butler, T., & Robson, G. (2003a). Plotting the middle classes: Gentrification and circuits of education in London. *Housing Studies, 18* (1), 5-29.

Butler, T., & van Zanten, A. (2007). School choice: A European perspective. *Journal of Education Policy, 22* (1), 1-5.

Butler, T. with Robson, G. (2003). *London calling: The middle classes and the re-making of inner London.* Berg: Oxford, United Kingdom.

Central Atlanta Progress and the City of Atlanta. (2000, March). Central Atlanta Action Plan. Retrieved on July 28, 2011 from http://www.atlantadowntown.com/_files/docs/ca2p.pdf

Chapman, M. (2011). Neighborhoods in Study. Unpublished map.

Chemerinsky, E. (2005). The segregation and resegregation of American public education: The court's role. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School resegregation: Must the south turn back?* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC.

Chernoff, M. (1980). Social displacement in a renovating neighborhood's commercial district: Atlanta. In S. Laska & D. Spain (Eds.), *Back to the city: Issues in neighborhood renovation.* (pp. 204-219). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.

CityData. (2007a). Kirkwood neighborhood profile. Retrieved on December 1, 2009 from http://www.CityData.com/neighborhood/Kirkwood-Atlanta-GA.html.

CityData. (2007b). Grant Park neighborhood profile. Retrieved on December 1, 2009 from http://www.CityData.com/neighborhood/Grant-Park-Atlanta-GA.html

CityData. (2011a). Kirkwood neighborhood profile. Retrieved on May 9, 2011 from http://www.CityData.com/neighborhood/Kirkwood-Atlanta-GA.html.

CityData. (2011b). Grant Park neighborhood profile. Retrieved on May 8, 2011 from http://www.CityData.com/neighborhood/Grant-Park-Atlanta-GA.html

City of Atlanta Online (n.d.) Neighborhood planning units. Retrieved October 20, 2011 from http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/npu_system.aspx

Clay, P. (1979). Neighborhood renewal: Middle-class resettlement and incumbent upgrading in American neighborhoods. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.

Clodfelter, C., Ladd, H., & Vigdor, J. (2005). Classroom-level segregation and resegregation in North Carolina. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School resegregation: Must the south turn back?* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94* (Suppl.), 95-120.

Collins, C., & Gibney, J. (2010). Place-making and the limitations of spatial leadership: reflections on the Øresund. *Policy Studies 31*(4), 475-489.

Combs, B. (2010). The ties that bind: The role of place in racial identity formation, social cohesion, accord, and discord in two historic, black gentrifying Atlanta neighborhoods. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Georgia State University.

Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: A short introduction.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Croft, J. (2003, February). *Gating communities for children?: The perennial problem of school choice, residential location & their (continuing) relationship with neighbourhood.* Economic Social Research Council Centre for Neighbourhood Research Paper 14. Retrieved on July 6, 2003, from http://www.neighbourhoodcentre.org.United Kingdom/research/pro01_02.html#wp0013

Cucchiara, M. (2008). Re-branding urban schools: Urban revitalization, social status, and marketing public schools to the upper middle class. *Journal of Education Policy, 23,* 165-179.

Cucchiara, M., & Horvat, E. (2009). Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal 46*(4), 974-1004.

Davis, M., & Pickel, M. (2008, August 9). Look of Atlanta changes. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution.* Wednesday, August, 9, 2008. Retrieved on October 3, 2008. http://www.ajc.com/search/content/news/stories/2008/08/09/atlcensus.html

Deal v. The Cincinnati Board of Education, 369 F.2d 55. (1966).

DeSena, J. (2006). "What's a mother to do?": Gentrification, school selection, and the consequences for community cohesion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *50*, 241-257.

DeSena, J. (2009). *Gentrification and inequality in Brooklyn: The new kids on the block.* New York: Lexington Books.

Dinda, S. (2008). Social capital in the creation of human capital and economic growth: A productive consumption approach. *The Journal of Socio-Economics, 37*, 2020-2033.

Donath, J., & Boyd, D. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal, 22* (4), 71-82.

Driskell, R., & Lyon, L. (2002). Are virtual communities true communities? Examining the environments and elements of community. *City & Community*, *1*(4) 373-390.

Egan, T. (2005). Vibrant cities find one thing missing: Children. *The New York Times*. Vol. CLIV, No. 53,162+, Thursday, March 24, 2005, p. A1, A19.

Ehrenreich, B. (1990). *Fear of falling: The inner life of the middle class.* New York: Pantheon.

Elmore, R. (1991). Choice as an instrument of public policy: Evidence from education and health care. In W. Clune & J. Witte (Eds.), *Choice and control in American Education.* Vol. I, 285-318. New York: Falmer Press.

Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2006). *Spatially bounded online social networks and social capital: The role of Facebook.* In International Communication Association Annual Conference, Dresden.

Fan, C. (2008). Religious participation and children's education: A social capital approach. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 65,* 303-317.

Florida, R. (2003). *The rise of the creative class.* Basic Books; New York, NY.

Frankenberg, E. (2005). The impact of school segregation on residential housing patterns: Mobile, Alabama and Charlotte, North Carolina. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School resegregation: Must the South turn back?* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC.

Freeman v. Pitts, 503 U.S. 467 (1992).

Frey, W. (May, 2004). The new great migration: Black Americans' return to the south, 1965-2000. *The Living Cities Census Series.* Retrieved August 15, 2011 from http://www.brookings.edu/urban/pubs/20040524_Frey.pdf

Friedman, M. (2002). *Capitalism and freedom.* (3rd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1962)

Fuller, B., & Elmore, R., with Orfield, G. (Eds.). (1996). *Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gee, J., Hull, G., & Lankshear, C. (1996). *The new work order: Behind the language of the new capitalism.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

George Arthur v. Ewald Nyquist, 573 F.2d 134, 142 (1978)

Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.). Data reporting: Schools in Georgia. Retrieved August 1, 2011 fromhttp://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=211&PID=61&PTID=67&CTID=217&SchoolId=ALL&T=0&FY=2010

GAcollege411 (n.d.). Georgia's HOPE scholarship program overview. Retrieved October 18, 2011 from Georgia Student Finance Commission https://secure.gacollege411.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/HOPE_Program/Georgia_s_HOPE_Scholarship_Program_Overview.aspx

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Glass, R. (1964). *London: Aspects of social change.* London: MacGibbon & Kee.

Green, P. (2005). A rigorous journey into phenomenography: From a naturalistic inquirer viewpoint. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved on November 19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

Godwin, R., & Kemerer, F. (2002). *School choice tradeoffs: Liberty, equity, and diversity.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Goldring, E.B., & Hausman, C.S. (1999). Reasons for parental choice of urban schools. *Journal of Educational Policy, 14,* 469-490.

Gorard, S., Taylor, C., & Fitz, J. (2002). Does school choice lead to 'spirals of decline'? *Journal of Educational Policy, 17,* 367-384.

Grant Park Neighborhood Association. (GPNA, n.d.). Retrieved on October 2, 2009 from http://gpna.org/core/item/page.aspx?s=2122.0.0.20

Grant Park Parents Network. (GPPN, n.d.). Retrieved on August 31, 2011 from http://grantparkparents.org/.

Greatschools.org. (n.d.). School results for Atlanta. Retrieved on August 31, 2011 from http://www.greatschools.org/search/search.page?search_type=0&q=atlanta&state=GA&c=school&gradeLevels=e&st=private

Green, P. (2005). A rigorous journey into phenomenography from a naturalistic inquirer position. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Retrieved November 19, 2009 from http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=1921166037;res=IELHSS

Griffith, A., & Smith, D. (2005). *Mothering for schooling*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Hackworth, J. (2002). Postrecession gentrification in New York City, *Urban Affairs 37*(6), 815-843.

Hackworth, J. (2007). The neoliberal city: Governance, ideology, and development in American urbanism. New York, NY: Cornell University.

Hackworth, J., & Smith, N. (2001). The changing state of gentrification. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, *92*(4), 464-477.

Hankins, K. (2004). Site of Exclusion? Practicing Social Citizenship and Transforming Urban Space through the Creation of a Charter School. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia.

Hankins, K. (2005). Practising citizenship in new spaces: Rights and realities of charter school activism. *Space and Polity, 9(*1), 41-60.

Hankins, K. (2007). The final frontier: Charter schools as new community institutions of gentrification. *Urban Geography*, *28*(2), 113-128.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Healey, K., Haynes, M., & Hampshire, A. (2007). Gender, social capital and location: Understanding the interactions. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 16*(2), 110-118.

Helft, M., & Stone, B. (2010, February 10). With Buzz, Google plunges into social networking. *The New York Times*, p. B3.

Henig, J. (1996). The local dynamics of choice: Ethnic preferences and institutional responses. In B. Fuller, & R. Elmore with G. Orfield (Eds.), *Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hess, F. (1999). *Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Holme, J. (2002). Buying homes, buying schools: School choice and the social construction of school quality. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*, 177-205.

Hornsby, A. (1991). Black public education in Atlanta, Georgia, 1954-1973: From segregation to segregation. *The Journal of Negro History, 76* (1), 21-47.

Horvat, E., Weininger, E., & Lareau, A. (2003). From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*, 319-351.

Horvat, E., Weininger, E., & Lareau, A. (2006). From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J. Dillabough, & A.Halsey (Eds.), *Education, globalisation and social change.* 454-467. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hoxby, C. (1994). Does competition among public schools benefit students and taxpayers? Working Paper 4978. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Downloaded August 1, 2011 from http://www.nber.org/papers/w4978

Johnston, D., & Swanson, D. (2006). Constructing the "Good Mother": The experience of mothering ideologies by work status. *Sex Roles, 54*, 509-519.

Joinson, A. (2003, April). *'Looking at', 'Looking up' or 'Keeping up with' people? Motives and uses of Facebook.* Paper presented at the CHI 2008 Proceedings, Florence, Italy. Retrieved on December 16, 2009 from http://people.bath.ac.United Kingdom/aj266/pubs_pdf/1149-joinson.pdf

Karsten, L. (2003). Family gentrifiers: Challenging the city as a place simultaneously to build a career and to raise children. *Urban Studies, 40*, 2573-2584.

Kaplan, D. & Holloway, S. (1998). *Segregation in cities.* Washington, D.C.: Associated of American Geographers.

Keating, L. (2001). *Atlanta: Race, class and urban expansion*. Philadephia, PA: Temple University Press.

Keating, L. (2009). Development, redevelopment and gentrification of Atlanta's housing: 1980–2007. In D. Sjoquist (Ed.), *Past trends and future prospects of the American city: The dynamics of Atlanta.* Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Keynes, J. (1964). *The general theory of employment, interest and money.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. (Original work published 1936).

Kirkwood Babies & Kids Group. (n.d.). Retrieved on September 3, 2011 from http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kirkwoodbabies/?v=1&t=directory&ch=web&pub=groups&sec=dir&slk=42.

Kirkwood Neighbors Organization (KNO), Kirkwood Neighborhood, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved on September 15, 2007 from http://www.historic-Kirkwood.com/

Kruse, K. (2005). *White flight: Atlanta and the making of modern conservatism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lakes, R., & Carter, P. (2009). Disciplining the working classes: Neoliberal designs in vocational education. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, *4*(2), 139-152.

Lareau, A. (2000). My wife can tell me who I know: Methodological and conceptual problems in studying fathers. *Qualitative Sociology, 23*, 407-433.

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families. *American Sociological Review, 67*(5), 747-776. Retrieved on September 25, 2006 from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088916.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Lareau, A., & Conley, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Social Class: How does it work?* Russell Sage Foundation: New York, NY.

Lareau, A., & Shumar, W. (1996). The problem of individualism in family-school policies. *Sociology of Education, 69,* 24-39. Extra Issue: Special issue on sociology and educational policy: Bringing scholarship and practice together.

Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. (2003a). Cultural capital in educational research: A critical assessment. *Theory and Society, 32,* 567-606. Special issue on the sociology of symbolic power: A special issue in memory of Pierre Bourdieu.

Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. (2003b). Translating Bourdieu into the American context: the question of social class and family-school relations. *Poetics, 31,* 375-402.

Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. (2008). Class and the transition to adulthood. In A. Lareau & D. Conley (Eds.), *Social Class: How does it work?* Russell Sage Foundation: New York, NY. 118-151.

Lee, J., & Bowen, N. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal, 43,* 193-218.

Lees, L. (2000). A reappraisal of gentrification: Toward a 'geography of gentrification'. *Progress in Human Geography, 24,* 389-408.

Lees, L., Slater, T., & Wyly, E. (2008). *Gentrification.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Leinberger, C. B. (March, 2008). "The next slum?" The Atlantic Monthly. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/subprime

Lin, N. (1999a). Social networks and status attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology, 25,* 467-487.

Lin, N. (1999b). Building a network theory of social capital. *Connections, 22*(1), 28-51.

Lin, N. (2000). Inequality in social capital. *Contemporary Sociology 29*(6), 785-795.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Lipman, P. (2004). *High stakes education: Inequity, globalization, and urban school reform.* New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Lipman, P. (2008). Mixed-income schools and housing: advancing the neoliberal urban agenda. *Journal of Education Policy, 23*(2), 119-134.

Lipman, P. (2009). The Cultural Politics of Mixed-Income Schools and Housing: A Racialized Discourse of Displacement, Exclusion, and Control. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 40(3),* 215-236.

Lipman, P. (2011). Contesting the city: Neoliberal urbanism and the cultural politics of education reform in Chicago. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education 32*(2), 217-234

Liu, H. (2008). Social network profiles as taste performances. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 13,* 252–275. Retrieved on December 18, 2009 from http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117979378/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

Liu, H., Davenport, G., & Maes, P. (2006). Taste fabrics and the beauty of homogeneity. *Association of Information Systems SIG SEMIS Bulletin (Fulton County 2006), 3*(1). Retrieved on December 17, 2009 from http://mf.media.mit.edu/pubs/journal/HomogeneityTaste.pdf

Liu, H., Maes, P., & Davenport, G. (2006). Unraveling the taste fabric of social networks. *International Journal on Semantic Web and Information Systems, 2* (1),

42-71. Retrieved on December 17, 2009 from http://mf.media.mit.edu/pubs/journal/TasteFabric.pdf

Lloyd, R. (2002). Neo-bohemia: Art and neighborhood redevelopment in Chicago. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 24*, 517-532.

London, B., Lee, B., & Lipton, G. (1986). The determinants of gentrification in the United States: A city-level analysis. *Urban Affairs Quarterly, 21*, 369-387.

Loving, C. (1999). Atlanta Public Schools Archives. Retrieved September 1, 2011 from http://atlanta.k12.ga.us/Page/367

Lyons Inquiry into Local Government. (2007). Place-shaping: A shared ambition for the future of local government. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Maguire, M., Ball, S., & Macrae, S. (2001). 'In all our interests': internal marketing at Northwark Park School. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *22*(1), 35–50.

Malinka, K., & Shäfer, J. (2009, May). *Development of social networks on email communication*. Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Internet Monitoring and Protection, Venice, Italy. Retrieved on December 17, 2009 from http://www.computer.org/portal/web/csdl/doi/10.1109/ICIMP.2009.13

Maloutas, T. (2007). Middle class education strategies and residential segregation in Athens. *Journal of Education Policy, 22(*1), 49-68.

Martin, D. (2003). "Place-framing" as place-making: Constituting a neighborhood for organizing and activism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *93*(3), 730-750.

Martin, L. (2007). Fighting for control: Political displacement in Atlanta's gentrifying neighborhoods. *Urban Affairs Review, 42,* 603-628.

Martin, L. (2008). Boredom, drugs, and schools: Protecting children in gentrifying communities. *City & Community, 7*(4), 331-346.

Martin, L. (2007). Fighting for control: Political displacement in Atlanta's gentrifying neighborhoods. *Urban Affairs Review, 42*, 603-628.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science,* 10, 177-200.

Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography—A research approach investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, *21*(2), 28-49.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and awareness.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Marton, F., & Pong, W. (2005). On the unit of description in phenomenography. *Higher Education Research and Development, 24* (4), 335-348.

Massey, D. (1994). A global sense of place. *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An interactive approach.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCarthy, M., Cambron-McCabe, N., & Thomas, S. (1998). *Public school law*, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

McNeal, R. (1999). Parent involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. *Social Forces,* 78(1), 117-144.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. (Rev. ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs. (2002). Gentrification in Grand Rapids. In L. Wisniewski (Ed.), Gentrification Report: Gentrification in Grand Rapids, pp. (1-4). Grand Rapids, MI: Michigan State University.

Mioli, A., & O'Neill, S. (2000). The consequence of educational table-scraps for poor urban minority schools, *Fordham Urban Law Journal, 27,* 1903-1942.

Missouri v. Jenkins, 515 U.S. 70 (1995).

Moe, T. (2001). Schools, Vouchers, and the American Public. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Moore, K. (2005). What's class got to do with it? Community development and racial identity. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 27*(4), 437- 451.

Moore, K. (2009). Gentrification in Black face?: The return of the Black middle class to urban neighborhoods. *Urban Geography, 30* (2), 118-142.

Morse, S. (1997, August). Atlanta's $250 Million Empowerment Zone Mess Big Promises Produce Few Results. Georgia Public Policy Foundation. Retrieved on July 28, 2011 from http://www.gppf.org/article.asp?RT=14&p=pub/Spending/EZ.html

Nagel, T. (1991). *Equality and partiality.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Neild, R. (2005). Parent management of school choice in a large urban district. *Urban Education*, *40*(3), 270-297.

Noguera, P. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Oberti, M. (2007). Social and school differentiation in urban space: Inequalities and local configurations. *Environment & Planning A, 39,* 208-227.

Oria, A., Cardini, A., Ball, S., Stamou, E., Kolokitha, M., Vertigan, S., & Flores-Moreno, C. (2007). Urban education, the middle classes and their dilemmas of school choice. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*(1), 91-105.

Ornstein, A., & Hunkins, F. (1998). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles and issues.* (3rd ed.) Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Peck, J., & Tickell, A. (2002). Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode, 34,* 381-404.

Penn-Edwards, S. (2010). Computer Aided Phenomenography: The Role of Leximancer Computer Software in Phenomenographic Investigation. *The Qualitative Report 15(2),* 252-267. Retrieved on March 1, 2011 from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-2/penn-edwards.pdf

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

Podmore, J. (1998). (Re)reading the "loft living" habitus in Montreal's inner city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 22*(2), 283-302.

Poupeau, F., François, J., & Couratier, E. (2007). Making the right move: How families are using transfers to adapt to socio-spatial differentiation of schools in the greater Paris region. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*(1), 31-47.

Reardon, S., & Yun, J. (2005). The color of southern schooling: Contemporary trends. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School Resegregation: Must the South Turn Back?* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC.

Reay, D. (1998a). *Class work: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling.* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Reay, D. (1998b). Engendering social reproduction: Mothers in the educational marketplace. *British Journal of Sociology of Education 19*(2), 195-209.

Reay, D. (2008*).* Psychosocial aspects of White middle-class identities: Desiring and defending against the class and ethnic 'Other' in urban multi-ethnic schooling**.** *Sociology*, *42,* 1072–1088.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & James, D. (2011). *White middle-class identities and urban schooling.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reay, D., & Lucey, H. (2003). The limits of 'choice': Children and inner city schooling. *Sociology*, *37,* 121-142.

Redfern, P. A. (2003). What makes gentrification 'gentrification'? *Urban Studies*, *40,* 2351-2366.

Reid, K. S. (2003). Atlanta facing empty seats in new schools. *Education Week*, 9/17/2003. Retrieved on April 6, 2004 from http://www.ahaweb.org/pressroom/printpubs_print.cfm?id=76

Renzulli, L., & Evans, L. (2005). School choice, charter schools, and White flight. *Social Problems*, *52,* 398-418.

Roberts, A. (2011, February). Gentrification and School Choice: Where goes the neighborhood. Paper presented at 63rd annual conference of the Southeastern Philosophy of Education Society, Decatur, GA.

Roberts, A., & Gowen, S. (2004, April). Re-Gentrification and school choice: The fusion of middle class values in 'up-and-coming neighborhoods'. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Robson, G., & Butler, T. (2001). Coming to terms with London: Middle-class communities in a global city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *25,* 70-86.

Rose, D. (1984). Rethinking gentrification: Beyond the uneven development of Marxist urban theory, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 2,* 47-74.

Rose, N. (1996). The death of the social? Refiguring the territory of government. *Economy and Society, 25*(3), 327-356.

Rumberger, R., & Palardy, G. (2005). Does resegregation matter? The impact of social composition on academic achievement in southern high schools. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School resegregation: Must the south turn back?* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC.

Sassen, S. (1991). *The global city*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Savage, M. (2008, May). *Location and identity: Cultural capital and claims to place.* Center for Research on Socio-cultural change & Sociology. Working paper. Retrieved on December 2, 2009 from http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c6/04/32/37/MikeSavage.pdf

Sawicki, D. (2002). Atlanta Neighborhood Change Report 1980-2000. Georgia Institute of Technology. Retrieved on February 11, 2010 from *http://www.arch.gatech.edu/~dapa/reports/atlneighchg/*.

Schneider, M., & Buckley, J. (2002). What do parents want from schools? Evidence from the internet. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24,* 133-144.

Schneider, M., Teske, P., & Marschall, M. (2000). *Choosing schools: Consumer choice and the quality of American schools.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schwarz, A. (2011). Atlanta school year begins amid a testing scandal. *New York Times,* August 7, 2011, p. A11.

Silva, E. (2006). Homologies of social space and elective affinities: Researching cultural capital. *Sociology, 40,* 1171-1189.

Sjoquist, D. (Ed.). (2009). *Past trends and future prospects of the American city: The dynamics of Atlanta.* Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Smith, N. (1979). Towards a theory of gentrification: A back to the city movement by capital, not people. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 11* (1), 24-35.

Smith, N. (1996). The *new urban frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city.* New York: Routledge.

Smith, N. (2008). *Uneven development: Nature, capital, and the production of space.* (3rd ed.). Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

Spencer v. Kugler, 404 U.S. 1027 (1972).

The Report of the Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School. (2002). *Divided we fail: Coming together through public school choice.* New York, NY: The Century Foundation Press.

Trounstine, P., & Christensen, T. (1982). *Movers and shakers: The study of community power.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

U.S Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009, July). Achievement gaps: How Black and White students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Statistical analysis report. Retrieved 10/29/2011 from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2009455.pdf

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2011a). Census Tracts 205, 206, 207, 208.01, 208.02 Dekalb County, Georgia. Retrieved October 23, 2011 from

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2011b). Census Tract 50, Fulton County Georgia. Retrieved October 23, 2011 from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003a). Migration and Geographic Mobility in Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan America: 1995-2000. Issued August 2003. Retrieved on December 2, 2005 from www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-9.pdf .

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003b). Migration by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1995-2000. Issued October 2003. Retrieved on December 2, 2005 from www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-13.pdf

U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003c). Migration of the Young, Single and College Educated: 1995-2000. Issued November 2003. Retrieved on December 2, 2005 from www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-12.pdf

Vincent, C. (2001). Social class and parental agency. *Journal of Educational Policy, 16*, 347-364.

Vincent, C. (2003). Social justice in the head. Are we all libertarians now? In S. Ball (Ed.), *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Vincent, C., & Martin, J. (2000). School-based parents' groups: a `politics of voice and representation'? *Journal of Education Policy*, *15*(5), 459-480.

Vincent, C., & Martin, J. (2002). Class, culture & agency: Researching parental voice. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education, 23*(1), 109-128.

Walker, M. (2010). Choice, cost and community: The hidden complexities of the rural primary school market. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 38*(6), 712-727. Retrieved on June 19, 2011 from http://ema.sagepub.com/content/38/6/712.

Walker, M., & Clark, G. (2009). Parental choice and the rural primary school: Lifestyle, locality and loyalty. *Journal of Rural Studies, 26,* 241-249.

Warde, A. (1991). Gentrification as consumption: Issues of class and gender. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 9,* 223-232.

Warde, A., & Tampubolon, G. (2001, April). *Social capital, networks and leisure consumption*. CRIC Discussion Paper No 42. University of Manchester & UMIST. Retrieved November 19, 2009 from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.24.1932&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Weis, L., Farrar, E., & Petrie, H.G. (Eds.). (1989). *Dropouts from school.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Wells, A. (1996). African American students' view of school choice. In B. Fuller & R. Elmore with G. Orfield (Eds.), *Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Wells, A., Baldridge, B., Duran, J., Lofton, R., Roda, A., Warner, M., White, T., & Grzesikowski, C. (2009). *Why boundaries matter: A study of five separate and unequal Long Island school districts.* Final Report to the *Long Island Index.*

(July, 2009). Teachers College, Columbia University Center for Understanding Race and Education (CURE).

Wells, A., & Frankenberg, E. (2007). The public schools and the challenge of the Supreme Court's integration decision. *Phi Delta Kappan 89*(3), 178-188.

Wells, A., & Holme, J. (2005). No accountability for diversity: Standardized tests and the demise of racially mixed schools. In J. Boger & G. Orfield (Eds.), *School resegregation: Must the south turn back?* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Wells, J. (2004). *The origins of the southern middle class:1800-1860.* University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

White, P. (1994). Parental choice and education for citizenship. In Halstead, M. (Ed.), *Parental choice and education: Principles, policy and practice.* London: Kogan Page.

Winerip, M. (2011). Pennsylvania joins the list of states facing a school cheating scandal. *The New York Times*. Monday, August 1, 2011, p. A11.

Zahirovic-Herbert, V., & Turnbull, G. (2009). Public school reform, expectations and capitalization: What signals quality to homebuyers? *Southern Economic Journal, 75,* 1094-1113.

Zukin, S. (1989). *Loft living: Culture and capital in urban change.* (2nd ed.) New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

Appendix A

Scripted Interview Introduction and Questions

My name is Amy Roberts. I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University working on my dissertation research. This research is designed to explore the lived experience of parent-gentrifiers in the school-selection process. It is also interested in the social spaces and social networks where these experiences may take place. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may quit at any time. Are you ready to begin?

1. Describe the experience that led to your move to this neighborhood. Reflect on what that experience means to you now.
2. How many children do you have? How old are they? Describe the experience of a typical day in detail with regard to the pace and activities of your daily routine. How do you feel about your daily routine experience?
3. Describe your social experiences in the _____ neighborhood with regard to other families, parents, social activities, friends, social networks? Describe where most social networking experiences occur for you, including locations, by telephone, online or e-mail? How do you feel about these social experiences?
4. Describe your experience with playdates in the neighborhood? What are the challenges and successes of the playdate experience for you?
5. Where are the successes and challenges in learning about the school options available to you? Describe how you evaluate or prioritized the content of that information.
6. Describe the insight you have gained in your experiences regarding school selection. Is there any experience you want to describe that has been left out?