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Los Angeles

The Black Elephant in the Room:

A Case Study Analysis of the Role of Race in Charter School

Board Member Experience

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Daryl Spencer McAdoo Jr.

2018

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The Black Elephant in the Room:

A Case Study Analysis of the Role of Race in Charter School

Board Member Experience

by

Daryl Spencer McAdoo Jr.

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Walter R. Allen, Chair

Professor Patricia M. McDonough, Co-Chair

Critical scholars have asserted for decades that effective educational programming for black students and communities requires the guidance, governance, and leadership of African American professionals who can understand and affirm the identities of those being served (DuBois, 1935; Lomotey, 1989; Lomotey, 1993; Lightfoot, 1983; Sowell, 1976; Walker, 1993; and Walker 1996). However, community attempts to meaningfully contribute to governing efforts in public school districts have been resisted by systems and powerholders that protect traditional structures and restrict black control, influence, and autonomy (Dougherty, 2004; Forest, 2008; Guttentag, 1972; Podair, 1994; Green, 1970; Morris & Morris, 2000). As a result, many black community organizations have turned to contemporary reform models – namely charter schools –

to facilitate grassroots efforts that support black education outside of traditional district systems (Scott, 2012; Whitehurst & Croft, 2010; Rice, 2017). However, little is known about the ability of charter schools to facilitate better experiences for black leadership and/or support black-affirming educational agendas. To explore the role of race in board member leadership, experiences, perceptions, and stakeholder interactions, a QUAL-dominant, mixed methods, case study analysis of an urban charter school is performed.

Quantitative findings indicate that there are significant differences in the way black and white board members experience their board roles. Black board members have deeper connections with school communities and express greater desires to use board roles for uplift and advocacy. Additionally, black board members regularly report negative and adverse treatment in board relationships and interactions with accountability stakeholders. Moreover, qualitative data revealed four pervasive themes relating to the nature of board member experiences across race and stakeholder groups: Community Motivations; Contextual Hyperawareness; Affirmative Representation; and Challenges to Ability and Legitimacy. This study has implications for effective school governance, progressive charter reform, racial formation, grassroots initiatives, and community-based schooling models.

The dissertation of Daryl Spencer McAdoo Jr. approved.

Tyrone C. Howard

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Walter R. Allen, Committee Chair

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University of California, Los Angeles

2018

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Erica McAdoo -- a loving wife, a secret angel, and my best friend. She sacrificed her own time and plans (always with a smile and the kindest of words) to keep me motivated in reaching my educational goals. I could not have completed this project without her genuine love, support, and devotion. I am thankful to be blessed with such a wonderful wife and friend. Thank you, Erica!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not lost on me that I have been blessed to study under one of the most renowned critical sociologist in the world *and* that I get to call him my mentor. As my doctoral program advisor and dissertation committee chair, I have found Dr. Walter R. Allen to be one of the most encouraging and motivating scholars in the academy. His passion for critical and notable contributions is only excelled by his genuine love for his students and concern for their well-being and happiness. His candid advice, years of wisdom, sincere kindness, and desire to see me receive the best out of every opportunity has been a constant in our relationship and I am glad to have spent my five years at UCLA under his tutelage. He is a supportive and thoughtful man of faith and a father-figure in whom I trust to help steer the course of my professional career. His laugh is infectious, his advice spot-on, and he has always been proactive in making sure my personal needs were met and that I remained committed and successful in my doctoral pursuit. I could not have asked for a better graduate advisor.

Much like Dr. Allen, there are no shortage of good things I can say about Dr. David Berg as a teacher, a mentor, and a scholar. I credit Dr. Berg for single-handedly igniting within me a love of knowledge and teaching. Possibly the most talented teacher and facilitator I have ever known, Dr. Berg naturally motivates discussion, energizes discourse, and elicits passion from those with whom he interacts. I took a class with him my sophomore year of college at Yale University and I have kept in touch with him ever since. I consider him one of my life's strange occurrences in that a young black man from St. Louis would consider a matured Jewish psychologist from the east coast to be among my strongest and longest-standing friendships. He has been a caring coach and chief support throughout my life's journey and I blame him, and his

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PUBLICATIONS

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McAdoo, D. (May 2016). *What's Your Motivation? An Analysis of Career Motivations of Students Who Plan to Pursue Law School*. Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association, New Orleans, LA.

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Cota-Robles Fellowship, University of California – Los Angeles, 2013 - 2017

Chancellor's Fellowship, Washington University in St. Louis, 2007 - 2009

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Two Separate Americas

"At my old school the teachers were not necessarily nice to me but at least they didn't scream. Despite the occasional mean glare, and suspiciously lower math grade when I had the same answers as my friends on my homework, I enjoyed my old school. The hallways were always clean and the floors polished. The playground was decked with the best equipment and plenty of it. The library was full of color, bean bags, creative play areas, and books of every genre. All my friends who lived close to the school had the biggest houses and their own bedroom. Their moms didn't go to work, and sleepovers were the best! I didn't even mind that I was the only black boy in my class; I was in the 5th grade then and school was fun.

"In 6th grade everything changed. My family had to move out of our old neighborhood to a house on the other side of the city. At first, I was excited to go to a new school, meet new friends, and finally get to play on a different set of monkey bars. My excitement faded as I quickly learned all schools are *not* equal.

"I quickly taught myself to sit quietly with my head down to evade the barrage of expletives being exchanged between and among teachers and students. For some reason, everyone was angry here: teachers angry at students for talking in class; students angry at principals for overly harsh punishments; principals angry at parents for not immediately picking up the phone; parents angry at the school for calling them off work – again!

"I remember feeling embarrassed all the time. Sometimes for myself, but mostly for everyone else. Why are we still reviewing multiplication and long division in the 6th grade? Why are all the teachers yelling all the time? Why doesn't anyone listen to them? I finish my assignments in seconds while others struggle for the whole period. I sit quietly. I stare at a wall. I daydream to drown out the noise – there is *so* much noise. I ask for a book. There are no books. I go outside for recess. There are no monkey bars. There is no playground. There is a field, but the grass is muddy and patchy.

"And the fights! There are so many fights. My mom sat me down during my second week of school. I vividly recall the sternness in her voice. Her lips pressed. Her eyes locked-in on mine: 'If someone hits you, you hit them back! You hear me? This is not like your old school, they will fight you here and when they do you make sure they never do it again.' We were just a few miles from my old home – my old life – and yet everything was so different.

*"*I was only 12 years old when I realized the people in my city lived in two separate Americas… and one was clearly better!"

McAdoo, D., Personal Reflection, September 2017.

Over 150 years after the civil war and America remains a nation of separate spaces. There are red states and blue states; wealthy neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods; "good" schools and "bad" schools. The negative impact of long-standing separate and unequal rights and resource distribution has hit African-Americans in high poverty areas the hardest. Due to structural

disadvantages and restrictions, roughly two-thirds of African-Americans live within the urban centers and the suburban border towns of the nation's most criminally active cities (Parker & McCall, 1999; PBS, 2003). Conversely, four out of five white Americans live outside of cities and 86 percent of whites live in neighborhoods where minorities make up less than 1 percent of the population (Parker & McCall, 1999; PBS, 2003).

Segregation brought about by redlining and predatory lending practices – along with latent racial biases – have relegated a large portion of the black population to dwell in inferior-resourced communities with fewer jobs, underperforming and segregated schools, reduced access to healthy food & medical, and other functional disparities (Walker, Keane & Burke, 2010; Frankenburg & Lee, 2002; Parker & McCall, 1999). Such systemic disadvantages have caused the wealth gap to sky rocket in recent years. According to a wealth analysis performed by McKernan, Ratcliffe, Steuerle, Quakenbush and Kalish (2017), when you consider relevant factors such as home value, debt, investments, income, and liquid assets, the wealth gap between black and white families has grown from $121,000 in 1963 to nearly $800,000 in 2016. Despite decades of seemingly progressive legislation flaunted by political powerholders, disparity runs rampant; this has forced many black families, leaders, and scholars to turn to schools as a source of hope, and to promote educational achievement as the remedy for unchecked marginalization.

Looking for Hope: Black Leadership & Charter Schools

American education is often touted as the "great equalizer" due to its perceived ability to increase educational and socioeconomic capital for the *haves* and the *have-nots* alike. Obtaining a high school degree can, on average, increase one's income by $10,000 a year; obtaining a college degree can increase it by an additional $25,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Josephson, 2017). It

is, perhaps, this function of schooling that often encourages marginalized populations to rally around educational reforms and innovative responses that re-design schools to meet the needs of their communities. However, schools are not protected spaces and due to organizational and institutional practices, many public schools promulgate infrastructures and ideologies that promote whiteness and debilitate black success (Vaught, 2011). Even schools with majority African American student populations are regularly placed under the leadership of white principals, superintendents, and boards of directors that fail to understand the needs and desires of black communities (Stewart, England, & Meier, 1989; Wells & Crain, 1997). The result of such practices has greatly impeded black achievement.

The black-white academic achievement gap has barely budged in a half century. In 1965, the average black 12th grader placed at the 13th percentile of the score distribution for white students in math and reading. Fifty years later, black students only moved up to the 19th percentile of the white distribution in math and to the 22nd percentile in reading. Furthermore, while black student graduation rates have shown progress in recent years, African-Americans were still graduating high school at a rate that was nearly 20% lower than that of whites in 2013 (Bidwell, 2015; NAES, 2013). Hence, decades of educational legislation and political agendas have done little to level performance. But who is to blame for the persistent stagnation in black school success; for many, the buck stops with leadership and its inability to holistically serve black constituencies.

Black intellects and civic leaders alike have asserted for decades that effective educational programming for African American communities requires the guidance, governance, and oversight of African American leaders who can understand and affirm the identities of those being served (DuBois, 1935; Lomotey, 1993). Lomotey's (1987) research makes it a point to highlight the

overwhelming positive response that black school leaders have black students and their academic achievement However, community attempts to meaningfully contribute to governing efforts in public school districts have found themselves confronted by powerholders and layers of archaic bureaucracies that protect traditional institutional structures and resist black control, influence, and autonomy (Forest, 2008; Guttentag, 1972; Morris & Morris, 2000).

To alleviate this friction, some educational leaders have championed contemporary educational reform models; namely, charter schools. Charter schools are believed to provide greater local autonomy and more opportunity for innovative, nontraditional responses to educational challenges. Ideally, such a reform option should more effectively empower disenfranchised communities as it relates to utilizing schools to counter systemic inequality. But are charter schools free from the organizational pressures that suppress black identities and success in traditional district models? Can dynamic racial shifts in leadership be adequately supported in charter schools to promote better outcomes for black students?

Leadership matters; and in American schools, so does race. Thus, through a case study analysis of board member experiences at an urban charter school, this dissertation aims to explore the impact and relevance of race in school board leadership and add perspective to the discourse surrounding educational reform, academic outcomes, and effective school leadership in African American communities.

Research Purpose

There is no shortage of research devoted to understanding the factors that impact the education of African Americans. Similarly, as charter schools expand and become key contributors in educational reform, many scholars have likewise explored how these spaces impact the success

or failure of black children. Understandably, many researchers and practitioners start their critiques at the top by examining school and board leadership. An ever-growing body of charter school literature has emerged in recent years with a focus on board composition, characteristics, and accountability structures in school effectiveness (Baysinger & Butler, 1985; Herman & Renz, 2000; Pfeffer, 1973; Siciliano, 1996; Zald, 1967). Most often, however, these narratives focus on the academic outputs of students while failing to highlight the role that leaders and powerholding stakeholders play in directing the design and execution of educational initiatives in black communities. Furthermore, little attention is given to the role that race plays in charter school board relations and success. Considering that one fourth of all charter schools serve student populations that have 99 percent black or minority enrollment or higher, the lack of consideration of race in school leadership is deeply concerning and highly negligent (NCES, 2017; Moreno, Finn, Melia, 2017).

Because little is known as to how race impacts the board member experience and board success in charter schools or how board members in black schools perceive their role, and the role of other stakeholders, neither the scholarly or the pragmatic community has been able to provide community members with substantive recommendations that can uniquely support successful leadership in majority-black schools. Therefore, the purpose of this research is two-fold: 1) to explore the experience of urban school board members within the context of a burgeoning charter school landscape and identify key themes that highlight the role that race plays in board leadership and governing experiences; and 2) highlight the unique perspectives, experiences, and contributions provided by African American board members while unearthing the challenges black leaders may face when confronted by white systems, stakeholders, and ideologies covertly embedded within the charter systems.

To accomplish this goal, a qualitative case study analysis will be performed on an independently operated, urban charter school (which we will call *Prestige Academy*) located in urban center of St. Louis, MO. Multiple sources of qualitative data will be collected from both African-American and Caucasian-American individuals who previously served on the board of the site school. Quantitative survey data from past and present board members at schools throughout the geographic area will also be used to provide contextual analysis and triangulate salient themes. Furthermore, news articles, school marketing materials, educational plans, board bylaws, city historical records, state department of education data, and autoethnographic reflections are synthesized to provide a contextual narrative backdrop for school site and city. Both an Embedded Intergroup Relations Framework and a Critical Race Theory lens will be applied to this research to support depth of understanding in the organizational and systematic dynamics impacting race and board member relations. By using these methodical approaches and tools, this research will act as a significant contribution to the understanding of race, leadership, and school reform.

Guiding Questions

To better understand the experience of charter school board members, the follow over-arching main question (MQ), and three additional sub-questions (SQs), were developed to guide the review of literature, methodologies, and research agenda for this study:

MQ) If, and in what ways, do board members view race as being significant in their board experiences and how does race and socio-geographic context impact board member perceptions, interactions, and engagement as charter school leaders?

SQ.1) What commonalities and/or differences exist in the way that black and white board members exhibit connections to the local community and how do these connections impact how board members perceive their role as school leaders?

SQ.2) If and/or how are black board member voices and agendas supported or silenced within exchanges with fellow board members and/or accountability stakeholders?

SQ.3) If and/or how are board members using their charter school board leader role to intentionally gain control of schooling in their communities, and in what ways does the charter school landscape help or hinder such motivations?

Significance

Most economists, practitioners, scholars, and policy makers alike believe that educational attainment is directly linked to labor market performance. Thus, the substantial academic deficits prevalent in large portions of our population due to widespread underperformance of urban schools will inevitably reduce the competitiveness of our nation's human capital as a whole; this will hinder industry and reduce economic viability in the global market. To improve the nation's educational outcomes, we need to start on the ground floor with organizations and institutions. As with any organization, we know that leadership matters and is paramount in goal attainment and organizational success. As a result, it is important that we better understand the role of leadership in schooling, particularly as it relates to board governance in emerging reform models, such as charter schools.

Charter schools, as an educational reform option, have grown exponentially in the past two decades and has become a major contributor to the educational landscape in the majority of U.S states. Through this line of inquiry, we will gain a better understanding of how race impacts board

functions, experiences, and interpersonal interactions within the nation's most contested reform policies. Furthermore, better understanding how race impacts the engagement and effectiveness of charter school board members, communities can better position themselves to design, develop, and/or manage grassroots educational projects that promote success, reduce the negative impact of white supremic systems, and assist in reversing long-standing social, academic, and economic inequalities. Because board leadership directly impacts school effectiveness, these insights will ultimately impact school and student success.

Furthermore, this project will help us understand how charter schools, and public schools broadly, work to promote/ truncate black voice in board leadership and in what ways leaders and community stakeholders can better steer educational efforts to support urban communities in more relevant and equitable ways. History has taught us that the categorical removal of black autonomy in the education of black children has often resulted in the inevitable depletion of positive school-identity for black youth (Yeakey, 2002; Finn, 1989; Ford, 1985; Wells & Crain, 1997; DuBois, 1935; Milner & Howard, 2004; Walker & Byass, 2003; Lightfoot, 1983; Sowell, 1976). If charter schools are going to be a long-standing reform initiative, it is imperative that black communities learn to leverage this system in ways that support black agency and hegemony. Thus, this study will also attempt to lay the groundwork for critical scholarship that seeks to promote black student performance and academic trajectories through identifying the influencers of, and obstacles to, black autonomy in school reform.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to conducting empirical analysis at the site school, a detailed review of literature surrounding African-American schooling & leadership, school boards, and the charter school landscape will help us situate our methods and findings within broader literary discussions. The review of the literature aims to provide a synopsis of the research, history, and concepts that underlie the major themes and motivations of this study. To accomplish this aim, supporting literature was identified and categorized under three (3) section headings: 1) Leadership, Control, and Black Schools; 2) The Charter School Movement; and 3) School Boards & Board Diversity. Each section will provide a layer of understanding as to how historical and contemporary scholars discuss some of the ideas raised within the study's guiding questions, including: how has race historically been dealt with in school leadership; when and where have black leaders been effective in – or deterred from – determining educational agendas; and what role has charter schools and school boards played in promoting or alleviating racial disparities. Thus, the literature review will help us understand how scholars have defined the nature and impact of racialized phenomenon on leadership in black schooling.

Leadership, Control, and Black Schools

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) judicially affirmed that American schools were both separate *and* unequal. Many in the black community were already well-aware that their children were being taught in schools that were fundamentally less resourced, under-funded, and in poorer physical conditions. Many began to view integration and access into white schools as a key strategy in supporting opportunity for future generations of African American youth. What started as *one* key pathway to uplift, however, quickly evolved into a contemporary mainstream narrative

supporting the ubiquitous embrace of pushing black students into white systems as the ideal schooling model.

Yet, there is – and has always been – a substantial voice within the black community that vied for black hegemony and autonomy in schooling. In the early years of black schooling, during its rise after the antebellum period, it was both expected and encouraged by black intellectual and civic voices that black students should be taught in black-led schools (Aptheker, 1990). Black leaders at the turn of the 20th century believed that the development of black schools was of paramount importance; however, they weren't the only ones. Foundations and public powerholders also took a keen interest in the creation of schools for black children but their views on what those schools should look like, and who should be in charge, seldom aligned with that of black leaders.

Early Black-Led Schools and the Infiltration of Foundations

W.E.B Dubois (1935) is on record prior to WWII advocating for separate black schools. His rationale was that black schools with black leadership would provide the institutional framework needed to increase the black scholar's contribution to society via empowering black histories and identities. The assumption is that African-Americans know best what African-Americans need in their education. During the first half of the 20th century, numerous black-led organizations (such as The Negro Phoenix; The Augustine Educational Society; and the African-Methodist Church) embraced this belief and grew out of the fields of post-emancipation oppression to support and lead educational initiatives that would safeguard against the destructive nature of white ideologies on black students (Aptheker, 1990). Most of these leaders and organizations believed that the black school's mission is not merely to provide academic instruction but to commit to the burden and legacy of group-uplift, a philosophy rarely promoted by white-led organizations (Aptheker, 1990). Thus, for black communities at the turn of the century, schools

were not just a place where facts and skills could be acquired, but the means by which communities would galvanize and cultivate their youth for the purpose of overcoming the harsh and unyielding legacy of discrimination and oppression in which elder generations were forced to live. With this motivation, black communities began financing, building, and operating their own schools across the nation as soon as the American Reconstruction period commenced (Anderson, 1998).

It is understood, however, that recently freed slaves struggled to find the resources needed to develop the types of schools they envisioned for their children. As a result, outside support was often welcomed by communities attempting to build the basic structures of the early American, modern school house. Charitable foundations – seemingly benign in nature and laced with cash and influence – arrived to answer the call. Foundations began building, and/or supporting the development of, thousands of black schools across the country, many of which located in the south to support Reconstruction objectives (Anderson, 1998).

When charitable foundations attempted to "solve" the ills of the American lower-class by infiltrating black schools, however, their actions where almost always in direct conflict with the goal of black uplift. The Rosenwald Fund, the Carnegie Foundation, and the General Education Board exemplify three such organizations that were established with private donations to "fix" education in the black south. Even though these institutions were charitable in their missions, there lied within their workings an inextricable theme- "the interest of American corporate wealth" (Karier, 1973, p. 110). While the black community was pushing for structural change in school curriculum that would allow them greater access to opportunity, mobility, and self-sufficiency, foundations continued to enforce institutional frameworks on schools that maintained the caste system (Davis, 2006). In the 1930s, the Rosenwald Fund endorsed the imposition of industrial curricula that limited blacks to low-level trade vocations such as janitors and shoe-shiners.

Philanthropic foundations such as the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation and the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, which are known for their historic generosity, regarded black higher education as "the futile and even dangerous work of misguided romantics" (Anderson, 1998, p. 247).

Wealthy organizations led by white men also used their money to exact influence over local and state education officials in order to control the direction of black education. In one such case, the General Education Board hired a state education official as a general field agent to create a backdoor channel to administer directives to state appointed superintendents responsible for majority-black communities (Davis, 2006). Foundations were able to push their private agendas into the black public domain to create a system of public schools that primarily functioned to provide the labor needs of the elite (Karier, 1973). Another attempt to control black schooling through public officials was more sinister in nature. Not very many people questioned the initial election of Thomas S. Bugel to president of the St. Louis Public School Board in the latter part of the 20th Century. However, when it was later revealed the Bugel had ties with, was funded by, and was receiving orders from, nonprofit organizations such as The Citizens Council and the Ku Klux Klan, many understood his opposition against smaller classes in black schools and integration of black students into white schools as part of a larger racist and malicious agenda (Wells & Crain, 1997).

Black leaders, such as Dubois and Woodson, fiercely denounced the ulterior motives of elite philanthropists. Yet, public urban schools remained among the number of defenseless institutions who were often administratively infiltrated by private organizations seeking to retard the development of black children. In the end, black communities learned to distrust white leadership over black schools as it was apparent that their goals and desires for black students were

fundamentally at odds with their own. This rift was clearly depicted in the way black school leaders and teachers were treated by public officials and school boards after *Brown,* at the height of "integration".

Integration and Black Leader Exclusion

Black school leaders and teachers historically held prominent roles within their communities. Pre-*Brown*, African-American men and women were revered for their service as educators and were well respected in their communities for playing the roles of: surrogate parents, disciplinarians, counselors, role models, and advocates for the academic, social, cultural, emotional, & moral development of black children (Milner & Howard, 2004). Unfortunately, post-*Brown* desegregation in the 1960s resulted in the categorical closing of black schools across the nation, and the wide-scale firing and demotions of thousands of black educators (Walker & Byass, 2003). During this period, the black community hemorrhaged its black teaching and school staff and approximately 38,000 African Americans teachers and administrators, across 17 states, lost their positions (Milner & Howard, 2004; King, 1993).

Many scholars have devoted a lot of time analyzing the trends and motivations behind the en-masse ousting of black educators as it created a massive imbalance in the teaching force and caused black children to be overrepresented in schools and classrooms lead by white teachers and principals. This categorical removal of black educators from the schooling systems was believed to be a direct result of racial bias held by white, district decision-makers. During the period immediately after the Brown decision, white powerholders deemed black principals to have been ineffective in educating black children (Ethridge, 1979). Expert witnesses who testified during a series of post-desegregation legal proceedings called for the dismantling of all-black schools and

the replacement of black principals with white ones in states like Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. In these states, between 1954 and 1965, more than 50% of the black principals were dismissed (Ethridge, 1979). Abney (1980) speculated that the all-white school boards and superintendent networks were heavily responsible for this trend. In his study of black principals in Florida he found that black principals were employed in each of the 67 school districts within the state in 1965; yet, ten years later, 27 of these districts had no black principals at all even though the black school-aged population had increased. Furthermore, in 1975, Florida added 165 new public schools while simultaneously firing or demoting 166 black principals.

Black principals were essentially the victims of an educational genocide and their extinction was within arms-length in the 60s. Fultz (2004) cited a 1971 U.S. Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity report revealing that Black principals were being eliminated with "avalanche-like force and tempo" (p. 28). In addition to direct firings, demotions of black principals also occurred and was orchestrated through four primary mechanisms: (a) demoting black principals to teaching or non-teaching positions, (b) downgrading their schools to lower grade levels, (c) allowing them to retain their title but with no real power, and (d) giving them "paper promotions" to central office positions with no influence (Tillman, 2004). These practices forced black principals who remained in school leadership to work almost exclusively in elementary and junior high schools and/or to work in schools where decision-making authority was allocated to a white assistant (Tillman, 2004). This effectively removed black principals as meaningful authority figures at the school-site level.

The prevailing sentiment held by white officials was that black educators were unfit to teach black or white children. To combat this view, many early critical, black scholars investigating the relationship between race and school leadership post-*Brown* largely focused on

the importance of the black principals and classroom leaders. Such research has promoted better understanding in: the characteristics of "good" schools for black students (Lightfoot, 1983; Sowell, 1976); the role of leadership identity in shaping black school culture (Lomotey, 1989; Lomotey, 1993); relationships between segregated schools and the community (Walker, 1993; Walker 1996); and caring forms of leadership endemic to black leaders (Lyman, 2000).

While many mainstream scholars were just starting to examine the impact of educator race on student achievement by the 1980s, Lomotey's (1987) case study was already taking an in-depth look at black school leadership post-*Brown* by highlihting successful African-American principals. Through his research, Lomotey (1987) affirmed that black principals have an overwhelming positive response on black students, and particularly on their academic achievement. He attributes this fact to the alignment of cultural understandings shared between black students and educators. Lomotey (1987, 1989, 1993, 1996) expanded his ethnographic investigation into black school leadership over the next few years and identified that African American principals embodied characteristics that personify an "ethno-humanist role identity" that supported: a commitment to black students; compassion for black students and their families; and confidence in black student intellectual abilities (Lomotey, 1993).

Recent research has affirmed and/or built upon the themes of Lomotey's work. Reitzug and Patterson (1998) found that many black educators show "a form of caring that empowered students by assisting them in identifying alternative ways of proceeding as they addressed the situations that confronted them" (p. 165). Morris (1999, 2004) and Pollard (1997) studied principals who support black schools by setting high standards for themselves, for teachers, and for students. Banks (2001) reported that African American principals generally involve parents and community members more in the activities of their schools than white principals. Furthermore,

16

Sanders and Harvey (2002) examine the leadership role of black principals in developing collaborative partnerships with community organizations.

In general, most critical scholars found black principals to be a great benefit to black students because of their propensity to display student-centered and community-supportive behaviors. For this reason, African American teachers also appeared to be more apt in educating black children. Black teachers tended not to rationalize black student failure by blaming family or society and would, thus, hold them to higher standards than white teachers (King, 1993; Foster, 1990). Additionally, Dempsey and Noblit (1996) pointed out that teaching is cultural and black teachers are more culturally aware of black students' ways of life, norms, customs, family, and community values. According to Milner and Howard (2004), because black teachers often lived in the communities in which they taught, many black teachers developed meaningful relationships with their students and their families, which had positive effects on student development. Thus, an added consequence of early displacements of black principals was the disruption of the identification and recruitment of caring and cultural aware black teachers who could be mentored for effective principalship; this effectually eliminated the black teacher-to-principal promotion pipeline (Karpinski, 2004).

Presently, America continues to feel the sting of integration's mass black leader removal. While 16 percent of public school students are African American, only 8 percent of public school teachers identify as such (Madkins, 2011). While black principal rates started to re-stabilize in the 1980s, and currently hovers around 11 percent, most black principals are forced into the most under-resourced and lowest performing schools where they are given the daunting and unrealistic task of creating substantial turn-arounds within short timeframes; due to the stacked circumstances, these appointments seldom end with notable gains (Brown, 2005; Tillman, 2004). Furthermore,

black principals are often placed in schools where they find themselves having to rebuild and repair communication with black parents, which were destroyed by the white, middle-class teachers, principals, and school boards that preceded their tenure (Brown & Beckett, 2007).

The impact of the black school leader/educator mass discharging has left black students in school spaces regularly lead by white educators who were unable or unwilling to relate to their cultural experiences (Milner & Howard, 2004; Picower, 2009). Such trends would be understandable, and possibly even defensible, if they were accompanied by notable growth in black student access to better-resourced and more supportive schools through integration efforts. However, a half century after *Brown vs the Board of Education,* it appears that America is defaulting back into separate and unequal schooling.

Re-segregation and the Fading Hope of *Brown*

Many Americans believe that all children benefit more from integrated education being that integrated schools have significantly lower dropout levels and better records of preparing students for college (Orfield, 2001). For black families, enrollment at a suburban school means greater access to resources and more experienced teachers (Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, 2002). Yet, fewer black families are finding shelter from failing urban schools within integrated suburban schools. Frankenburg & Lee (2002) found that out of 239 districts servicing over 25,000 students, virtually all districts showed lower levels of inter-racial exposure in 2001 versus 1986, revealing a trend and an affinity towards public school re-segregation. According to data analysis from the Center for Inquiry in Science Teaching and Learning (2007), even within formally desegregated St. Louis City, over 50 percent of public schools have student populations that are over 90 percent African-American in 2007 even though the city was only 65 percent African-American at the time.

18

Unfortunately, federal legislation has done little to aid in the fight against separate and unequal. As it turns out, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal policy aimed at closing the achievement gap, has worked to widen school resource disparity and segregation by shifting the debate from unequal schools to how to measure and reward schools based on performance outcomes; this has caused a fundamental avoidance of the inequalities that exist in schools and a neglect of the root causes of those inequalities (Knaus, 2007). Furthermore, integration is failing to grow in America because white parents simply do not want to send their kids to school with too many black kids. When white parents have a choice, they choose segregated schools, and are willing to relocate or challenge district boundaries to achieve this aim; this is true even when white parents identify themselves as liberal or progressive (McClaughlin, 2017; Cornish, 2016; Goldstein, 2015; Taylor, 2015).

Today, fewer black families are reaping the benefits of an integrated suburban education. Conversely, integration – when it does happen – seems to cause just as much harm as good. Because black students often enter integrated schools that have received little-to-no psycho-social restructuring for their arrival, they often encounter teachers and administrators that noticeably low expectations of their abilities (Fergusan, 2003). Lowered perceptions of black ability often manifest themselves in the implementation of racialized tracking projects in suburban schools, which push black students into academic programs that reduce performance (Fergusan, 2003; Tyson, 2011). Furthermore, integrated schools often make black students feel like outsiders. Finn and Voelkl (1993) reported that a failure to feel as though you belong causes African American children to decrease positive identification with school. Having a strong school identity is often linked to high academic performance and better school related outcomes; yet, since *Brown*, school identification for African-Americans – males especially – is extremely low and this has caused

19

many students to develop behaviors that directly conflict with school engagement (such as absenteeism, truancy, delinquency, and withdrawal) (Yeakey, 2002; Finn, 1989; Ford, 1985).

The denouncement of black culture and black students in white-led schools is a real and present danger according to Morris and Morris (2002), who found that black students who integrate into white schools experience overt racial assaults, the total exclusion of their cultural symbols, and are forced to endure unfair and insensitive representations of black history and heritage. On college campuses, the research is extensive and conclusive: black students in white spaces face a myriad of stereotypes, microaggressions, and overt discriminatory attacks that damages their social and academic sense-of-self and inevitably leads to poorer academic performance (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Britt & Turner, 2001; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Allen, 1992).

Because of the imbalance of power, integration has often meant that white ideologies and structures remain dominant by actively suppressing black expression, culture, access, and involvement. We see this in the failure of white schools and parents to desire effective and comprehensive integration. We also saw this in the treatment of black educators in the years following *Brown* where the wholesale firing of black teachers, principals, and superintendents reflected white disdain for African-Americans in positions of power (Tillman, 2004). American history is riddled with countless examples of organizations, institutions, policies, and powerholders failing to faithfully exact equitable educational reform. As a result, black communities become fearful of the potential insidious motives of whites who tried to influence black education. With a brewing distrust of schools that are run by people outside of the black community, families and leaders alike prepared to fight for their right to be educated in under their own vision.

20

The Fight for Community Control

As far back as the American interwar era, oppressed groups – including Eastern European immigrants on the east coast, Mexican Americans in the west, and working-class citizens in the north – were successful in challenging state and local governments to gain enhanced school facilities, English as a Second Language (ESL) support, and culturally relevant curriculums (Bernard, 2001). Such actions allowed for these groups to reform their schools in such a way that it would better position their communities for social inclusion and financial mobility. African American communities likewise fought for meaningful and profitable education reforms and particularly sought control over the development and management of schooling in their neighborhoods (Davis, 2006; Karier, 1973). Yet, despite the continuous efforts of localized groups to fundamentally change the way their children are educated, there have been few scalable successes that have transformed schooling for black students.

Interactions with white powerholder often left black leaders and families silenced and wanting; as a result, black communities grew to perceive the city and state central offices, the boards of education, and teacher unions as enemies to the educational trajectories of black children (Forest, 2008; Guttentag, 1972; Morris & Morris, 2000; Wells & Crain, 1997). Still believing education is the answer to uplift, however, scholars and practitioners began to challenge that the current structure of majority-black, urban schools asserting that the traditional structures and methods used in public schools fail to effectively remediate the impact of one's family, social, and economic background (Hanushek, 2016). Thus, in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, black communities in New York, Alabama, St. Louis, and other major urban centers began to organize and focus efforts on gaining and/or reclaiming community control.

As civil rights agendas converged with parental educational concerns, black communities in urban areas demanded seats on school boards, pushed district leadership to promote 'black studies' curricula, forced central offices to redesign budgets, and fought for input in teacher and administrator hiring practices (Forest, 2008; Guttentag, 1972; Morris & Morris, 2000). In New York, one group of parents even occupied the offices of the city Board of Education for three days in November 1966 to press their demand for more local autonomy (Shaffer, 1968). Parents and leaders alike were learning to demand representation among the stakeholders directing the educational programming for their kids.

Similar bouts for greater community control sprout up across the nation. In the 1970s and 1980s, Milwaukee became incredibility influential in the community control movement after many African American families became incensed by the violence and hostility with which black students were treated at integrated white schools (Dougherty, 2004). Tainted experiences with integration lead to the rise of prominent activist and Black Panther affiliate Howard Fuller he adamantly attacked the district's busing and integration policies and heavily advocated for the education of black children at neighborhoods schools, which are controlled by neighborhood leaders (Byndloss, 2001: Nelsen, 2015). Fuller's message of community control and localized choice became so widely accepted he rose to the position of superintend of Milwaukee Public Schools in the early 1990s; Milwaukee's civil rights era, community control movement eventually laid the groundwork for the city's contemporary school-choice and voucher systems (Nelsen, 2015). Nevertheless, as seen in the Ocean Hill teacher union strikes in the 1960s, whenever black communities made meaningful headway in obtaining control, white institutional systems and powerholders resisted.

Following the *Brown v. Board* decision, over 4000 students in the Ocean Hill/ Brownsville area of Brooklynn were bused to white schools. Reminiscent of the experiences in Milwaukee, families frequently complained about student mistreatment (Podair, 1994). Bolstered by the civil rights movement, but frustrated by resistance to desegregation, African Americans began to advocate for community-controlled schools that promoted "black value systems" (Podair, 1994). Under mounting pressure from the community and prominent civic leaders, the New York City Board of Education established Ocean Hill/ Brownsville as a new, decentralized district operated under a separate, community-elected governing board; among other administrative tasks, the new board was given power to hire and fire administrators and school staff (Podair, 1994; Green, 1970).

The community-elected governing board identified that a key issue in school leadership was the lack of African American staff representation in neighborhood schools (only 8% of teachers and 3% of administrators were black at the time). Thus, the new administration began hiring more diverse applicants, including New York City's first Puerto Rican principal (Podair, 2001). Immediately, district and city officials began attacking these actions and revoked the board's requests for additional control over personnel, finance, and curriculum (Podair, 2008). White resistance to the community-elected board compounded after the board removed several white teachers from neighborhood schools who were believed to be overtly subverting the board's agenda. The local teacher's union lead a two-month long strike in protest to new hiring and placement decisions. The strike was followed by months of protests from community members, violent attacks on students and teachers, and long-standing strife's between black communities and white-led district officials in the city (Gordon, 2001; Podair, 2001).

Nevertheless, African-Americans did not simply give up the fight. Well into the 80s and 90s black communities continued to fight for community control. As recent as 2016 we see

community members vying for representative leadership on the Ferguson school board (a community made infamous by the police killing of an unarmed black teen – Michael Brown). In Ferguson, community members filed legal suit against the school district for unfair board election proceedings that kept this majority black community from having a majority representation on the school board. Community members were vindicated in *Missouri NAACP v. Ferguson-Florissant School District (2016)*, where a federal court ruled that the at-large electoral process used by Missouri's Ferguson-Florissant School District dilutes the voting power of the African-American community.

Yet, structural opposition continues to resist black progress. Holmquist (2017) reported that distrust in public schools has caused black families to exit local districts en-masse. In Minneapolis alone, black student flight accounts for more than half of all kids leaving the district, most of whom have opted for home schooling or school-choice/charter options, reflecting a desire of parents to take control of their students' educational process (Holmquist, 2017). With over a century of post-emancipation attempts to gain greater autonomy and meaningful representation of public and district schools, many communities are seeking other – more revolutionary – opportunities to lead education in their communities. For leaders looking to design their own programs, develop their own curriculum, hire their own teachers & staff, and pay for it all out of their own tax dollars, charter schools became an enticing choice for resistance.

The Charter School Movement

In the early 1990s a new wave of school reform hit urban communities. Driven by concerns stemming for staggering levels of high dropout rates, illiteracy, and ill-prepared students for the 21st century workforce, community and state agents began to push public education over-hauls for

the nation's most underserved children (Denton, 1992; DeVentura, 1990). Many of the perceived ills of the educational system were blamed on the bureaucratic nature of public schools. School reform proponents felt that public school bureaucracy inhibited innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness to society's rapidly changing educational needs, and that reform should focus on eliminating dated governance structures and increasing parental influence and investment in educational decision-making (Smith & O'Day, 1990). Vouchers were the first offspring of this reform movement, which redirect educational tax dollars from districts directly to parents, so parents can decide where to educate their children; however, vouchers were and remain controversial (Lubienski, 2003; Nathan, 1997). Charter schools emerged as a compromise to vouchers and to inject market choice and competition into public school systems to spur innovation.

Charter Growth and Structures

Charter schools first appeared in the U.S. in 1991 in Minnesota followed by California in 1992. By 2009, forty (40) states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have passed charter school (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010; NAPCS, 2017). Today, in 2016-17, there are more than 6,900 charter schools, enrolling an estimated 3.1 million students with Texas, New York, California, Arizona, and Florida leading the country in new charter school openings annually (NACPS, 2017). Even though charter school enrollment has more than tripled in the past 10 years, it still accounts for less than 5 percent of the total enrolled student population. However, with 73 percent of parents without charter schools in their area are in favor of opening one in their community, and with 1 in 10 parents nationwide stating that a charter would be their first-choice option, charter growth is expected to increase exponentially in the coming years (Prothero, 2017).

Charter schools are autonomous, publicly funded entities that operate based on a contract between an individual and/or group (e.g., teachers, parents, community leaders, etc.) and a sponsor (typically local districts or state boards of education) (Lavine, 1994). The ability for community groups to organize and exact governing leadership over a school that operates outside of district regulation is what makes charters exceptionally appealing to those who are dissatisfied with how current public-school options service their children. Most charter schools are organized as nonprofit organizations and they operate under the auspices of local, independently-governed, boards of directors (also referred to as board members or board of trustees) who maintain fiduciary and academic responsibility for the school.

Charter schools are responsible to sponsors for their performance, and the charter school board (often comprised of a collection of skilled civic leaders and community members) is held accountable to sponsors if the specified outcomes are not achieved. In exchange for accountability, the charter school is released from many of the district and state regulations that govern traditional public schools (such as mandated curriculum requirements); in theory, this allows the charter board to develop innovative and unique responses to educating children that are specifically tailored for specific populations, academic foci, or interest groups (Mulholland & Bierlein, 1993). Charters are allowed freedom from the rules, regulations and bureaucracy that are thought to hamper district effectiveness in exchange for production of specified outcomes within a set period; in other words, board autonomy is offered in exchange for accountability (Collins, 1999; Danzberger, 1992; ECS, 1999; Hadderman, 1998; Olson, 1992; Schwartz, 1996; Ziebarth, 1999). Thus, for many, the charter school has become the contemporary platform for attempting to regain community control in an ever-expanding bureaucratic and culturally detached schooling system.

Charters as Community Projects and Black School Solutions

In the pre-*Brown* era there were countless examples of black institutions and leaders creating schools on their own, for their own communities. The African Methodist Episcopal Church created Morris Brown College; Mary McLeod Bethune created Bethune-Cookman College; and Marva Collins fought valiantly against the Chicago Public School District to create Westside Preparatory School (Aptheker, 1990). Now, at the dawn of the 21st Century, black organizations across the nation have seized opportunities created by charter legislation to, once again, create schools with community focused missions and black leadership. Thus, the charter school is being used by many black communities to re-make schools that align with *their* goals (Scott, 2012; Whitehurst & Croft, 2010). The Harlem Children's Zone is one such charter project that is often touted as a beacon and exemplar model of how charters can better support and respond to the needs of the black community and promote community investment (Whitehurst, & Croft, 2010). But the Harlem Children's Zone is just the tip of the ice-berg when it comes to black community organizations galvanizing members and residents to spearhead and launch charter projects.

The Alpha Phi Alpha organization (a black Greek fraternity) has called on its members to open 50 new charter schools in the next five years; the nationally recognized Urban Prep Academy (an all-male Chicago charter that sends 100 percent of its students to four-year colleges) was birthed from this organization (Rice, 2017). Furthermore, the Detroit Alumni chapter of Delta Sigma Theta (a black Greek sorority) was instrumental in opening Delta Prep Charter, a school devoted to the sorority's pillars of service and community leadership. Additionally, the 100 Black Men of America, several chapters of the National Urban League, and countless grassroots groups

have opened charter schools across the nation to support community uplift efforts through black schooling (Rice, 2017).

Proponents of school reform often promote charter schools as the remedy for a bureaucratic public-school system that hinders the ability to respond to the needs of the communities they serve (ECS, 1996). Such proponents also argue that public schools lack autonomy and that the numerous rules and regulations that districts impose on schools unintentionally shift focus from achievement to compliance (Dianda & Corwin, 1994). Many charter school supporters believe traditional public schools promote a "one-size-fits-all" philosophy that fails to sufficiently respond to the diverse needs of students and discourages innovation and community investment (Dianda & Corwin, 1994).

Charters are thought to meet parental and civic demands for deregulation (i.e., greater flexibility), parental choice, site-based management, and market control over curriculum while remaining under the guise of public education (Collins, 1999; Danzberger, 1992; Danzberger et al., 1992; Hadderman, 1998; Schwartz, 1996; Twentieth Century Fund, 1992; Ziebarth, 1999). Advocates of charter schools have claimed that they challenge traditional educational governance and motivate innovation in the districts in which they reside (Collins, 1999; Schwartz, 1996). As a result, charter schools have become an increasingly common educational governance reform, specifically for urban communities who are exhausted with trying to facilitate change through resistant, white-led districts (Collins, 1999; Hadderman, 1998; Schwartz, 1996; Ziebarth, 1999).

Charter Critiques

Even though charter schools function under a guise of local autonomy, they are not immune to the infiltration or adverse systems that truncate black performance, escalate racial tensions, or subvert black voice. Numerous researchers have found charter schools to be promoters of racial

28

inequality via: over-enrolling students of color; supporting legislation that aligns with racist state policies and agents; and contributing to a process of privatization with inequitable racial-spatial redistribution of resources (Frankenburg & Lee, 2003; Parker, 2000; Levy, 2010; Buras, 2011). Similarly, a prominent criticisms of school choice and charter school programs is their potential to further stratify schools along racial, socioeconomic, and other class-based lines (Corwin & Flaherty, 1995; Elmore, 1987; O'Neil, 1996; Wells, 1993; Wells et al., 1999; Wells & Crain, 1992; Willms, 1996). This is partly due to concerns charters actively participate in "skimming", or the luring away of more privileged and/or higher achieving students from public schools to inflate performance results (Buechler, 1996; Elmore, 1986; Fitzgerald, Harris, Huidekoper & Mani, 1998; Lee & Croninger, 1994; Wells, 1993).

For many educators, the school-choice, free-market approach to education is highly problematic. Wells (2002) provides evidence that the laissez-faire policies of charter school reform often exacerbate existing inequalities. Through a critical review of 10 urban, suburban, and rural school districts and 17 charter schools in California, Wells (2002) concludes that although quality and experiences of charter schools are highly varied across different contexts, the laws that allow these schools to exist fail to assure meaningful accountability. Furthermore, she argues that state and federal policies work to increase inequality and stratification by pushing the educational system toward privatization in terms of finance and admissions while failing to target much-needed resources toward low-income communities. Essentially, market-based schooling inherently favors the well-off and hurts the less-privileged.

Research concerning charter school academic performance is mixed and highly varied, but conclusions often depend on school context and race-group disaggregation (Collins, 1999; ECS, 1999; Hadderman, 1998; Ziebarth, 1999). While examples of schools that have successfully raised

academic achievement appear in the literature, scholars have been quick to assert that studies have not definitively isolated the characteristics that contribute to their success (Hadderman, 1998; Ziebarth, 1999). Preliminary findings show that charter schools tend to attract racial and ethnic minorities in equal or somewhat greater numbers than local public schools but slightly fewer special needs students and English language learners (Collins, 1999; Hadderman, 1998). Additionally, it should be noted that while students of color and low-income students do attend charters in large numbers, the students who are enrolled in charter schools are not always the most disadvantaged members of their locale (Schwartz, 1996).

It is important to note that while over 300 charter schools opened in 2016, over 200 charters closed that same year, highlighting widespread alarm in charter performance and management (Prothero, 2017). Nevertheless, the charter movement is currently showing no signs of slowing down. Thus, with the black community refusing to give up its search for a new and better way to educate its children, one must wonder how charter schools will evolve to promote the success – or the silencing – of black leaders who are working to create schools in their image. To understand how charter schools support black community agenda, we must look at how charters empower their governing boards.

School Boards and Board Diversity

Principals and teachers are not the only individuals who act as leaders within schools; school board directors and trustees are integral players in leading and creating agendas that steer school programming. Local school boards, composed of lay individuals and vested with authority by their state, traditionally have governed public education in the United States (Johnson, 1988). The roots of this system of governance reach back more than 200 years to Massachusetts'

representative system of local governance by "select-men" (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992, 1994). As local governance responsibilities increased in tandem with population growth, select-men separated educational governance from general local governance and appointed committees in individual towns to govern education (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992, 1994). By the year 2000, over 95,000 school board members served on 15,000 local public school boards in the United States with most school boards being composed of five to seven members – urban boards are often larger (Resnick, 1999; Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

Public School Board Elections and Take-overs

The reform movement of the early 20th century, which transformed school boards into smaller, centralized, city-wide organizations, also brought more educated, higher income, successful professionals, and businesspeople to school boards. This change generated concern regarding the ability of such elite members to effectively represent the concerns of local citizens and communities (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994; Urban & Wagoner, 1996). According to surveys conducted by the American School Board Journal and Virginia Polytechnic & State University, school board members continue to differ demographically from the people they serve (ASBJ, 1997, 1998). Conversely, when sub-district elections are utilized they draw a more heterogeneous group of members than at-large elections; however, they also result in more contentious and fractured school boards and less effective governance (Resnick, 1999; ASBJ, 1997). As a result, the bulk of reform surrounding general public-school boards focus on selection procedures for members and the role and responsibilities of boards (Resnick, 1999) (Boone, 1996; Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994; Kirst, 1994; Robinson et al., 1985, Thomas, 1993; Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

Another large area of research surrounding contemporary public school boards focuses on the impact of "takeovers" on governance. State and mayoral takeovers of schools and districts are becoming increasingly common for public schools, particularly in urban districts (Danzberger, 1992). Proponents of state and mayoral takeovers have contended that takeovers refocus control and accountability at a time when numerous groups (e.g., federal, state, and local governments; business leaders; teachers' unions; special interest groups; the courts; district and school administrators; school councils; school boards; voters; and parents) are competing for control of the school system (Danzberger, 1994; Harrington-Lueker, 1996; Kirst, 1994; Kirst & Buckley, 2001; Shipps, 2001). Additionally, supporters have argued state takeovers: garner more political and financial support for education; encourage greater collaboration between education and general government; provide more widely and better integrated services to students and families; increase collaboration between superintendents and school boards (both are usually appointed in these instances); reduce the influence of special interests; and motivate schools and districts to improve in order to resume or prevent the loss of local control (Danzberger, 1994; ECS, 1999; Harrington-Lueker, 1996; Kirst & Buckley, 2001; Olson, 1992; Shipps, 2001; Ziebarth, 1999). Opponents have countered that state officials and mayors are not necessarily more capable of overseeing local schools than school boards and district administrators; that state officials are less responsive to local issues; education becomes less visible and loses public support; and that local voters are disempowered and unorganized groups have less influence when schools are taken over (Carol et al., 1986; ECS, 1999; Harrington-Lueker, 1996; Kirst & Buckley, 2001; Olson, 1992; Resnick, 1999; Shipps, 2001; Ziebarth, 1999).

Corporate Board Diversity

The literature on school boards, race and diversity is relatively scant. The literature that does concern itself with race namely focuses on board minority representation as it relates to student enrollment (Hess, 2002; Howard, 2007; Robinson & Bickers, 1990; Rocha 2007; Turner, 2015); such research does little to further understandings of racial experiences or dynamics. There is some research that looks at board diversity in corporate governance, however. Research on corporate boards outside the K-12 space has been clear: race and diversity matter in organizational outcomes (Baysinger & Butler, 1985; Herman & Renz, 2000; Pfeffer, 1973; Siciliano, 1996; Zald, 1967). Many scholars have found that gender and racial diversity on corporate boards is positively correlated to firm value and financial performance (Carter, Simkins, Simpson, 2003; Harris, 2013). Furthermore, Miller and del Carmen-Triana (2009) argue that racial diversity improves organizational performance because it enhances both corporate innovation and reputation. Rose and Bielby (2011) noticed that companies often strategically respond to institutional and environmental pressures related to race by adding African Americans onto their boards of directors. Nevertheless, when it comes to the actual experiences of board members of color and how those experiences are influenced by race relations, the literature is relatively silent.

Charter School Boards

Research on charter school boards specifically is far less developed than that of public school boards, namely because of their much shorter life span in the educational space. Most of the research in this area is pragmatic and meant to provide charters with a blueprint of best practices board effectiveness and goal attainment (Fryer, 2014; Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2016). While often contested, much of the literature in this space highlights the board's need to embody the following characteristics: focus on student achievement; emphasis on policy over

administration; and good relationships with lead administrators, external agencies, and local and state governments (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992; Goodman et al., 1997; IASB, 1996; NSBF, 1999; Resnick, 1999; Speer, 1998; Urban & Wagoner, 1996). Also, there is a slightly more critical body of research devoted to evaluating the role and effectiveness of contracted/outsourced educational management companies in charter school governance and performance (Furgeson, et al., 2012; Bulkley, 2004; Henig, Holyoke, Brown, & Lacireno-Paquet, 2005).

Despite nearly four decades of active charter school operation and corresponding literature, there is little research devoted to understanding the prevalence and impact of race and racialized contexts in board member interactions and governing experiences. As a result, we are left to question rather community disempowerment, lack of adequate representation, and exclusion of certain cultural understandings, manifest themselves in charter projects in the same manner that they do in district models. Thus, the next section will layout a methodological approach for exploring the role and relevance of race in charter schools among charter board leaders.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

To better understand the role of race in charter school board member experiences within a contextual setting, this research will apply both an Embedded Intergroup Relations Framework and a Critical Race Theory lens to a QUAL-dominant, case study analysis. These two frameworks, used simultaneously, will allow us to examine racial impact on an interpersonal level while considering the impact of context and systems of white supremacy on boards. The qualitative case study, as an approach to research, will facilitate depth of understandings and phenomena within context using a variety of data sources.

Research Approach

For this study, the following data sources were collected and analyzed: focus group data, semi-structured interviews, quantitative survey data, document analysis, and auto-ethnographic insights. These multiple data sources help ensure that the issue is not explored independent from contextual influences but rather through a variety lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This approach "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning but does not reject outright [the] notion of objectivity. Pluralism, not relativism, is stressed with focus on the circular dynamic tension of subject and object" (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 10). As seen is *Figure 1*, the structure and sequencing of data collection & analysis is informed by the Embedded Intergroup Relations framework. Quantitative data will support the identification of contextual trends, then qualitative data will be leveraged to explore and understand how such trends manifest and/or relate to salient themes within the site group and site subgroups.
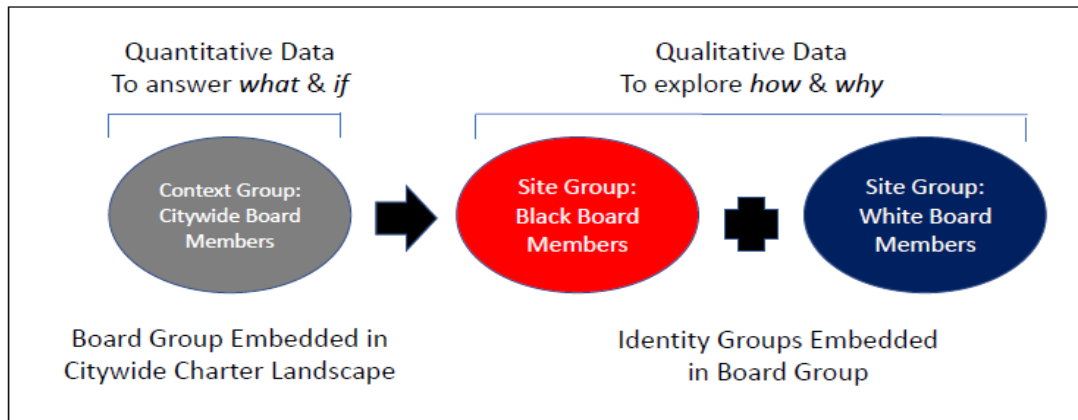
Figure 1 –Data Collection & Analysis Design Map

One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant and the enabling of participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories the participants can describe their views of reality; this enables the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993). Qualitative case studies are regularly used as a method of investigation in both organizational and intergroup relations research.

According to Creswell (1998), the case study explores a system, over time, via detailed and in-depth data collection. For this study, bounded system that was limited in both time and place was selected in the form of a charter school site – Prestige Academy – its board of directors, and the surrounding charter agents and stakeholders in the host city/geographical area.

Site

The case study site focuses on a newly developed charter school – Prestige Academy – in St. Louis, MO. The names of the school and major actors within the case (including participants and non-participating board members and accountability stakeholders) have been changed to support participant and external stakeholder confidentiality. During majority of the period covered

by this study, Prestige was a 5th through 8th grade middle school that enrolled roughly 200 African American students from across the city.

All participants selected for qualitative data collection where active members of the board of directors for Prestige for varying periods between 2009 and 2014. Additional school board members and leaders at other charter schools throughout St. Louis during the years of 2006 to 2017 also provided quantitative survey data relating to their board member experiences city-race views and perceptions to build the contextual setting. Lastly, auto-ethnographic data provided by the researcher (who was an active board member and school champion for Prestige during 2009 and 2014) – along with site documents, performance data, historical research, media coverage – is used to build the story of the site school and locale to inform contextual understandings. The above information will be analyzed using a bound case study design to extract relevant meanings (Creswell, 1998). Specific attention was paid to patterns and correspondence between categories as well as data that highlight the influence of race and context.

This particular site was chosen to provide nuanced, provocative insights related to the guiding research questions in this study. As a grassroots initiative, Prestige is not connected with a larger charter management organization or corporate entity but was the sole vision of a handful of mostly African-American St. Louis residents who desired to start a school that met the needs and desires for their community. Based on school descriptions provided in the original school plan and Mayoral Prospectus document, the founders viewed the development of Prestige as a purposeful attempt to promote black educational excellence through a culturally-relevant, classical curriculum that supported strong academic identities for black students (like the educational philosophies promoted by critical black scholars throughout the 20th Century). Furthermore, the school desired to implement a de-tracking, honors-only curriculum for an all African-American

student population, reflecting the belief and the desire of the founding team to subvert the traditional structure of urban school and support revolutionary systems that affirm high expectations of black performance.

According to *Figure 2* below, Prestige has experienced significant board development and shifts in member demographic and racial composition during its developmental years. This, along with the myriad of accountability stakeholders involved in the school's activities, will precipitate dynamic understandings about interpersonal interactions among stakeholders.

Site Developmental Stage	Stage Description and Key Events	School Fiscal/ Descriptive Data	Board Demography over Stage Time Period	Study Participants Serving at each Stage	Major Accountability Stakeholders at each Stage
Design Stage Dec 2008 to May 2010	• Forming of initial project team/board • Research & development of original school education model	*Grades*: N/A *Enrollment*: N/A *Staff FTE*: 1.0 *Budget*: ~$60K	*Black:*9 *White:* 6 *Other:*1 *40yrs+:4*	Arthur Joey Karen *Researcher*	Mayor's Office MO Charter Assoc. Walton Foundation
Startup Stage June 2010 to May 2012	• Staff/ student recruitment • 1st year of school	*Grades*: 5th-6th *Enrollment*: 112 *Staff FTE*: 12.0 *Budget*: ~$800K	*Black:*6 *White:* 4 *Other:*1 *40yrs+:4*	Arthur Etta Karen *Researcher*	Mayor Office MO Charter Assoc. Walton Foundation Sponsor (*1st Rep.*) State DOE
Operation Stage June 2012 to May 2014	• Leadership transitions • Founder exits Exec Director Role • Shooting of Michael Brown	*Grades*: 5th-8th *Enrollment*: 210 *Staff FTE*: 35.0 *Budget*: ~$1.6M	*Black:*4 *White:* 5 *Other:*1 *40yrs+:3*	Arthur *(staff)* Etta Julian Karen Linda *Researcher*	MO Charter Assoc. Sponsor (*Barry*) State DOE

Figure 2 – Chart of Prestige 's Developmental Stages and Key Stakeholder Involvements

Prestige is also a provocative study given St. Louis' history of highly segregated housing, extreme wealth inequity, severe systematic racism, and a racially-tensed social environment. Furthermore, the city has been proactive in promoting charter schools as legitimate education options for over ten years and has a well-developed and relatively diverse charter landscape. The

researcher, being a founding board member of the school himself, also has intimate knowledge of the school, its development, its host city, and its board members and stakeholders; this will support more effective participant recruitment, inquiry & probing, understanding of context, and identification of themes.

Recognizing the convergence of these factors, Prestige is an ideal location to extrapolate understandings relating to race, board member experience, and group relations across board and stakeholder groups. Since Prestige originated as a grassroots initiative that was unapologetically dedicated to creating a school by African-Americans for African-Americans, this site will allow us to explore motivating factors for black board members who utilize charter school platforms to exact uplift efforts. Furthermore, Prestige 's white board members have been instrumental in the development and governance of the school from its inception. White board members who served on the Prestige board were often extremely dedicated to the mission and vision of school and likewise wanted to see African-American students within St. Louis benefit from better schooling options. Thus, Prestige provides us with a setting in which we can explore relational dynamics across race and groups within the governing board context. Moreover, St. Louis will provide a nuanced contextual setting with numerous operating charter agents and powerful accountability stakeholder groups in which we can embed the site and better understand group relationships. Additional background and information about the site is shared in *Chapter Four: The Story of Prestige.*

Frameworks

To understand the role of race and its impact in the experiences of African American charter school board members, I will apply a Critical Race lens to an Embedded Group Relations Theoretical Framework. In doing so, I will seek to extrapolate instances of racialized power

dynamics at play in interpersonal interactions & attitudes as well as in real and perceived pressures from external powerholders. Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory will ensure that interpersonal experiences and relationships are appropriately centered within in-group and contextual group settings. The Critical Race lens will encourage the identification of bias and inequitable systems of power within those relationships while promoting the voices of black leaders. After analysis, the application of these frames will also be used to identify interconnectedness across themes and groups with a focus on how race functions in the charter school board experience for directors in similar settings.

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory

Embedded intergroup relations is an organizational theory that hails from social psychology and is used to understand how organizational, task, and/or identity groups function within organizational boundaries. The theory itself is rooted in Alderfer's (1977) theory of organizational development, which focuses on both internal and external properties of groups in organizations. According to Alderfer (1977), human "groups" can be defined as a collection of individuals who: 1) have significantly interdependent relations with each other; 2) perceive themselves as a group by reliably distinguishing members from nonmembers; 3) have a group identity that is recognized by nonmembers; 4) have significantly interdependent relations with other groups, and 5) have roles in the group that are a function of expectations from themselves, from other group and non-group members.

As the study of groups in organizations evolved, it became clear that groups share common relational behaviors, despite environment or group functions, including: 1) having psychical and/or psychological boundaries; 2) power differences that influence boundary permeability; 3) affective patterns that emerge and impact the strength of group boundaries; 4) cognitive formations,

common language and distortions that emerge to strengthen group boundaries, and 5) group leader behaviors that acts as both cause and effect on the total pattern of intergroup relations in a particular situation (Aldefer & Smith, 1982). The concept of embeddedness refers to interpenetration across levels of analysis; it concerns itself with how system and subsystem dynamics are affected by suprasystem dynamics & events, and vice versa (Miller, 1978). Thus, in embedded intergroup relations we are concerned with how identity groups are shaped by organizational groups, how the representatives of these groups are embedded in the organization, and how the organization is embedded in its environment. The effects of embeddedness may be observed on individual members, on dynamics within identity groups and organizational groups, and on intergroup transactions among and between groups (Aldefer & Smith, 1982).

The application of embedded intergroup relations will provide a useful frame for understanding how African Americans as an identity group functions in, and perceives the function of, the organizational group – the board of directors. As depicted in *Figure 3*, this theory can help us describe the interplay between groups and, thus, help us explore how black and nonblack board members interact with each other, how board members interact with external power-holding groups, and how these interactions are influenced by their positionality within the context of the city and its citywide charter community.
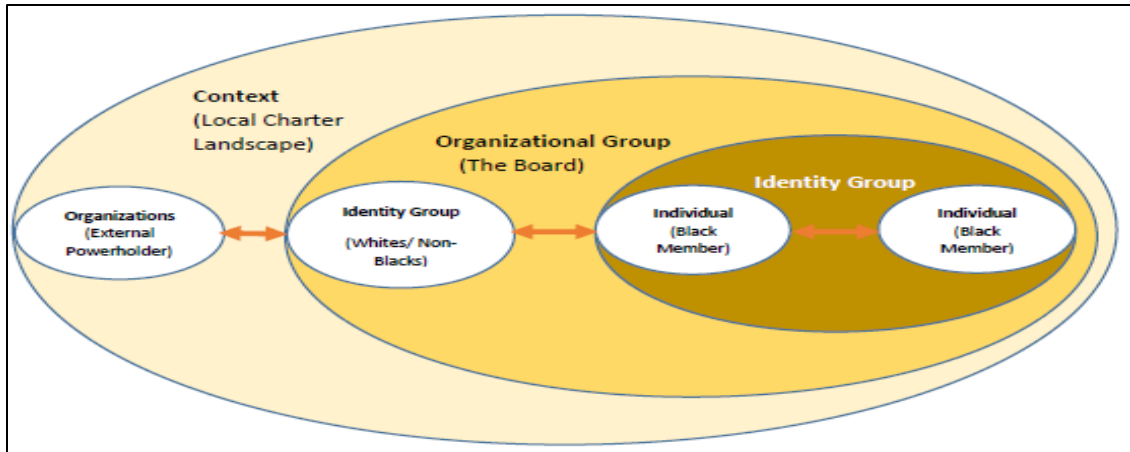
Figure 3 - Embedded Intergroup Relations Conceptual Model

Theory Application

The Embedded Intergroup Relations framework will be applied to the data collection and analysis process in the following ways:

Phased Collection & Analysis. The Embedded Intergroup Relations framework will inform a phased collection and analysis process in which contextual data from the geographical setting – a network of charter board members from across the city - is collected first to identify salient trends inherent to the environmental setting. This will be achieved through a quantitative analysis of survey data provided by citywide board member respondents. Following Phase I, Phase II data collection and analysis will include qualitative site group and identity group data (from Black and White board members) from the school site. Phase II data will be analyzed with an understanding of environmental interconnectedness in developing themes. Themes in this phase will not be restricted to those that are directly connected to contextual trends, nevertheless, environmental trends will guide the data collection process and analysis will be informed by such trends when applicable.

Focus on Group Identity. This theory will support a line of questioning within both the quantitative and qualitative data collection processes that seeks to understand how individuals within identity and/or stakeholder groups interact with each other and how charter board members describe their perceptions and experiences in board relationships and interactions within, between, and across identity groups and group boundaries.

Discussion of Embedded Group Influences and Connections. Interconnectedness in the patterns that manifest in Phase I's contextual analysis to the themes expressed in Phase II's site group analysis will be examined within the discussion section of the study. As independently-sourced findings arise out of each phase of inquiry, Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory will help support an understanding of how different, and seemingly unrelated, observations support a greater interrelated narrative that can be extrapolated to explain both the '*what'* and the '*how'* of race's impact in charter governance within this regional space.

Embedded Intergroup Relations Framework will help us better understand the role of race, racial perceptions, and power dynamics impact on interactions and attitudes within, across, and between groups. By filtering this organizational theory through a critical race lens, we will focus on how racial and power dynamics work within and between groups to subvert black hegemony and engagement through the stories and testimonies of black board members themselves.

Critical Race Theory

According to Bastedo (2012), individuals operating under a critical paradigm often challenge the intentions and structures of power dynamics. Change that is brought about by individuals in power is often seen as imperialistic, an attack on a subordinate culture, or an overall imposition. Critical theorists may often question practices such as educational accountability and

denounce them as attempts to enact control and maintain surveillance over oppressed groups. Thus, the critical "paradigm [usually] illuminates power, interests that are in play, and reasons why certain groups may support" certain forms of change (Bastedo, 2012, p 193).

When applied to race and ethnic studies, we can utilize a critical race lens to better understand how underlying power dynamics are used to push racially motivated agendas and maintain white dominance. Critical Race Theory (CRT) recognizes the effect of institutional racism (on and beyond the individual) on shaping dominant culture. CRT, as analytical lens, examines existing power structures and identifies how these power structures are based on white supremacy (Brooks, 1994). Often researchers fail to acknowledge the presence and importance of race in organizational and institutional research. Accordingly, Nkomo (1992) argues that this causes Eurocentric ideals, values, and agendas to permeate scholarly spaces and organizational interests. Thus, CRT is a framework that allows for "a collection of critical stances against the existing legal order from a race-based point of view… focus[ing] on the various ways in which the received tradition… adversely affects people of color" (Brooks, 1994, p 85).

Critical Race Theory was birthed out of a separate legal movement in the 1970s, known as Critical Legal Studies (CLS); this movement, and its contributing scholars, were deeply concerned over the slow pace of racial reform in the U.S. CLS scholars noticed that traditional forms of social justice protests and actions (legal filings, marches, appealing to moral sensibilities, etc.) produced fewer gains than in previous years (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). CLS thus argued that the civil rights struggle was not the steady, progressive movement towards social transformation that traditional legal and mainstream narratives depict. Instead, CLS asserted that legal ideology and discourse was a social artifact the functioned to recreate and sustain inequitable American systems and institutions (Lansing-Billings, 1999).

While originally applied to the study of law, today CRT is used by scholars across a myriad of disciplines. CRT's primary goal is to challenge the historical, economic, and cultural findings that shape the points-of-views of traditional knowledge and "unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step- by- step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pg. 3). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), theories rooted in CRT are often grounded by the following guiding principles: 1) that racism is a pervasive and permanent component of westernized society; 2) that racism and racist systems work to promote the interests of elites; 3) that race is socially constructed and an invention of the society; 4) that differential racialization can take place in order to respond to the needs of a given context or society; 5) promotes the existence and salience of intersectionality in context and research; and 6) the importance of the voices of people of color and an affinity for "story-telling" to capture these voices.

Application

When applied to education, CRT acknowledges the role that race and racism plays in how schools and institutions function (Bell, Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995). In particular, scholars examine how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups both deliberately and unintentionally. Accordingly, the Critical Race Theory analytic lens will be applied to the data collection and analysis process in the following ways:

1) The positioning of black board members as the preferred contributor of data and the primary story tellers of the narrative findings;

2) Support a line of questioning that seeks to identify *if* and *how* adverse dominant culture and ideologies are expressed across geographic context, among charter board members, and by accountability stakeholders;

3) Support a line of questioning that seeks to identify *if* and *how* accountability stakeholders and geographic powerholders work against the goal of black hegemony in charter school leadership;

4) When applicable, inform analysis and discussion that extrapolates and expands on trends and themes that highlight the presence of white supremacy and black suppression in the greater school leadership narrative.

By applying CRT to the research process in the preceding ways, the study will ensure active questioning and identification of themes that are intrinsic to black school leadership experiences but are commonly ignored or misdiagnosed in race-blind/ race-neutral research. These phenomena play a huge role in the outcomes of black grassroots initiatives, and black schooling in general. Thus, CRT will support the unearthing of those themes that are ever present yet rarely discussed in cordial, professional interactions among educators.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection and analysis was conducted in two phases, in alignment with its two selected frameworks (Embedded Intergroup Relations and Critical Race Theory), to answer this study's main research question: "*in what ways do board members view race as being significant in their experiences and how does race and socio-geographic context impact perceptions and interactions.*" The first phase focuses on quantitative survey data collected from respondents who are/were part of the Greater St. Louis charter board member network. This data provides a

contextual backdrop in which to embed the site data. The next phase of analysis utilizes qualitative data to identify themes within board member experiences at Prestige. This phase will help us understand how racial tensions may be expressed in group and stakeholder interactions. In addition to the exploration of our main research, Phase II also seeks to provide insights and answers to our sub-questions as well: *"what commonalities and/or differences exist in the way board members exhibit connections to the community"; "how are black board member voices and agendas supported or silenced in board exchanges";* and *"how are board members using their charter school board leader role to intentionally gain control of schooling in their communities"*.

Phase I: Quantitative Analysis of City Board Members

The first phase of data collection focused on identifying trends related to race, perceptions, and stakeholder interactions within the greater context of the charter school landscape in the host city. In order perform this task a closed-ended survey was constructed and administered to former and current charter school board members in St. Louis, excluding individuals that had served on the board of Prestige. The survey consisted of rating and Likert scale questions that could be easily quantified, measured, and compared. The purpose of the survey was to develop a database of information for quantitative analysis related to St. Louis charter school board members': demography, connections to the city, perception of race and race relations, understanding of their roles, motivations for their service, and perceptions of interactions within/between board member and stakeholder groups across race and gender. A copy of the survey instrument with all questions made available to respondents in available in the Appendices.

Sampling

The sample was collected from individuals who currently or previously held positions as board members in any charter school within St. Louis after 2006 (the period in which a formal

Request for Proposal (RFP) was administered by city officials for groups and organizations to develop charter school models). The exact size of this pool is unknown as no formal database or historical record of past or present St. Louis charter board members is available. However, by performing online searches of charter schools in the area and identifying active board members where possible, we can deduce that the average charter board size in most schools is around seven members. According to MO's department of education school and performance data systems, there were 14 charter schools operating from 2006 to 2017 period. Using an approximate board turnover rate of 3.5 years, which was extrapolated from the average length of time survey participants in our study reported serving on their board, we can estimate the total pool of potential board members to be around 250 individuals.

Participant selection relied on a mixture of purposive, snowball, and convenient sampling to obtain survey responses. Individuals were initially identified as potential participants by visiting the websites of all the currently operating charter schools in St. Louis. For those schools that had board member contact information (namely an email) listed on their website, the researcher contacted board members directly requesting their participation in a research survey pertaining to board engagement and interaction experiences. There were only three schools with a total of 17 board members with individual contact information made publicly available on their website. For those schools in which no board member contact information was readily available, the researcher contacted the school executive director or school leader (through email) and requested the school leader to send the survey invitation to each of their board members requesting. After both initial phases of data collection was completed, the researcher had collected seven survey responses from current and former board members.

After reviewing the demography of those individuals who submitted responses and noticing a lack of African-American board members and board members who served prior to 2015, the researcher began to solicit purposive and convenience participants by contacting individuals with which he had personally been acquainted during his tenure in the charter school community. Direct contact was made with ten individuals via email, LinkedIn, and Facebook – majority of which were African-American past board members, presidents, and/or exofficio directors at different grassroot schools in St. Louis. Individuals were asked to complete the survey and send the survey to other individuals who they knew served on charter school boards. After this round of recruitment was complete, the researcher received 17 more survey responses and completed data collection with a total of 24 participants.

Individuals that served as a board member at Prestige Academy were not included in analysis in order to isolate the experiences of board members outside of the site school; two participant surveys were removed for this reason. Additionally, only one respondent identified themselves as Asian American; the remaining participants all identified as either African-American or Caucasian American. To maintain dichotomous comparisons and to avoid conflating layers of racial nuances, the Asian-American applicant was also removed from the data. In all, 21 past and present charter school board members were included in Phase I analysis.

It should be noted that the survey was anonymous, and respondents were made aware of this fact to encourage more truthful disclosure of information. Thus, while basic demographic data was received, there is no mentioning of participant names, emails, contact data, or the school at which the respondent served (only verification that they served as a voting or ex-officio member and the years they served).

Participant Descriptions

There were 21 board members from the greater geographical location who were included in survey analysis. Nine of these respondents identified themselves as Black/ African-American; four of which were male and five of which were female. There were 12 respondents who self-identified as White/ Caucasian; six males and six females.

Respondent ages ranged from the 20s to 60s, with approximately two-thirds of respondents being 30 to 49 years. Gender response was relatively balanced with 11 female and 10 male respondents. African-Americans submitted 43 percent of the surveys, however, it should be noted that the representation of black respondents is likely higher than the true representation of African-Americans in board positions across the city. This discrepancy is due to convenience and purposive sampling and desire to ensure substantial voice of black board members in data collection. Overall, the participant pool is highly educated; 80 percent of participants have earned a master's degree or higher and 100 percent of applicants have a bachelors. Respondents come from a wide range of occupations and industries including: law, marketing, nonprofit work, public relations, education, counseling, banking & finance.

Analysis

Data are mostly on binary scale for analysis: 'Gender' coded as *Male* and *Female,* and 'Race' coded as *Black* and *White*. These binary variables were measured against respondent data in four interest areas: 1) **Board Composition**; 2) **Belief Systems**; 3) **Views on Board Purpose**; and 4) **Treatment & Discrimination**. Basic descriptive analysis (frequencies, crosstabs, means, and standard deviations) are used explore the **Board Composition** and make-up of the boards represented in the sample pool. Chi-squared analyses are used to test for significant statistical

differences between Black and White respondents within the "Connection to the City' variable within this category.

Means, standard deviations, and t-tests are used to compare board member personal ***Belief Systems*** and to measure statistical difference in means between Black and White respondents. Frequencies and crosstabs were used to rank items in the ***Views on Board Purpose*** section, based on participants responses and organized by 'Race'. Lastly, Means and standard deviations are used to measure experiences with ***Treatment & Discrimination*** for board members. Correlations were also used to see if there was a statistical significant relationship between respondents' 'Race' and 'Gender' and how they responded to items in the Treatment & Discrimination section.

Phase II: Qualitative Analysis of Site Board Members

The second phase of data analysis focuses on the qualitative experiences and perceptions of black and white board members at Prestige. To collect evidence for this task three types of qualitative data was gathered: ***Focus Group*** data from two former black male board members of Prestige; ***Semi-Structured Interview*** data from an African-American female former ex-officio board member, a Caucasian male former board member, and a Caucasian female board member; and a ***Document Analysis*** performed on a resignation letter from an African-American former female board member (that was acquired from historical board documents). These multiple forms of data were collected independently of each other and are used to support the triangulation of common themes within, between and across identity groups (Baxter & Jack, 2008)

Focus Group. The African-American, identity-based, microcosm focus group was led by the researcher. Invitations to participate in the focus group were sent to five different black former board members for whom the researcher had current contact information. Of these invitations,

51

three individuals agreed to participate (two male and one female); on the day of the session two participants showed up and the third (the black female) was unable to make it.

The microcosm focus group is an important data source because it will help participants with memory recollection and meaning-making but will also help reveal alternative cognitive formations among group members and between group members and the researcher (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). The focus group will primarily focus on critical events and interrelation structures among/between board members and with accountability stakeholders. Race and racial tensions, and their influence interactions, was a major focal area of focus group discussion and questions.

Semi-Structured Interviews. To triangulate findings from the focus group, and to ensure the qualitative contribution of an African-American women in analysis, a semi-structured interview led by the researcher was performed, over the phone, with a black female ex-officio board member. The participant was selected from three black females who had all received invites. Two of the three females initially agreed to interview but did not follow thru with the scheduling process. After two follow-ups, the researcher decided to interview only the participant who responded to all scheduling requests as not to make any participant feel pressured to participate due to the pre-existing nature of the relationships between board members and the researcher.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with two white former board members. Interviews were conducted independently, and data was analyzed to extrapolate themes that provide understanding into how these subjects perceived their experiences as board members in general and, more specifically, as white board members in a school that was unapologetically developed to support the black community.

Being that the researcher is an African-American male and would be the one to lead the interviews, the researcher contacted only those former board members with which he believed he

had positive and trusting relationships during his tenure at Prestige. Because being an outsider of this affinity group could naturally erode the trust between participant and researcher, by contacting board members with strong preexisting relationships, he could rely on trust built prior to the interview to promote more open and honest discussion and disclosure. As a result, the researcher contacted three potential participants via email for interviews. Two of the participants responded and agreed to participate in interviews (one white male and one white female).

The semi-structured interview format allows for open-ended questions while providing flexibility to explore concepts and questions without specific word/question order (Merriam, 2009). This interview sought unveil additional themes and nuances in board relational patterns and provide depth of context into sentiments and actions behind racialized interactions and motivations. Furthermore, interview data was used to cross-reference, challenge and/or explore critical events and salient themes that emerged during focus group discussion.

Document Analysis. Lastly, a document analysis was performed on a 2014 resignation letter from a black female board member. Being that the other forms of qualitative data involve participants reflecting on events and experiences from two to three years prior, the resignation letter – which provides detailed insight as to the resigning member's sentiments concerning the board interactions, race relations, and critical events within St. Louis – allows for us to analyze real-time motivations and perspectives on board experience and compare post-hoc data to at-time sentiments. Additional documents were included in this study for contextual analysis and site narrative and included school marketing materials, performance data, educational model and charter plans, and board bylaws.

Analysis

A thematic approach will be used to analyze qualitative data in this section and report findings as is common in research utilizing CRT. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data (Bruan & Clarke, 2006). Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. The themes become the categories for analysis and that analysis is performed through the process of coding. Thus, axial coding will be utilized to understand findings. This coding method will reassemble data and identify connections between/within categories, which is done by relating categories into subcategories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). This method helps specify properties and dimensions of a category and helps the researcher answer *if*, *how*, *when*, and *why* something happens (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

Member Checking: A member check, will be performed on all focus group and interview participants to check the accuracy of transcripts & narratives and support descriptive & interpretive validity. Participants will be provided with copies of their final transcripts and given the opportunity to update/correct its contents. They were also allowed to read the analysis informed by their contributions at the conclusion of the study to ensure there is no misinterpretation of their words and/or ideas. Participants were provided two weeks to respond to the researcher if they wished to discuss any updates or changes to transcripts, narratives, or findings.

Participants

Arthur (Focus Group): Arthur is an African-American male in his mid 30s with a master's in education administration. He has spent several years working as a dean in a vocationally-focused, charter school in St. Louis prior to joining Prestige. He has also been pursuing an Ed.D.

online for the past few years as well. He was one of the original founders of the school and served as the board's first chairperson. He was shifted to vice chairperson after the school added new board members per the recommendations of the mayor's and sponsor's office; a white male lawyer was elected chairperson in Arthur's stead. A few months after the school opened, additional student support was needed in the administration and Arthur (who had school admin experience and loyalty to the Prestige vision) transitioned off the board to become a full-time student support dean in the school. Arthur served on the board from early 2009 to fall 2011 and he worked as an administrator in the school from fall 2011 to summer 2014. Arthur left the school in 2014 to pursue over career objectives.

Julian (Focus Group): Julian, also black male in his mid-30s, served on the board from spring 2012 to summer 2014. Julian is a licensed therapist and an experienced school counselor with a master's in educational psychology. He is a current resident of the city of St. Louis and his children attended K-6 charter schools in the city for a period during his tenure on the board. He also has an extensive background in educational administration but has worked namely in suburban school districts with majority white student populations. After serving as a lay member on the board for a year, Julian was elected to board chairperson in 2013 after the previous chairperson took a position with the city's public school district and stepped down to avoid a conflict of interest. Julian resigned from the board in 2014.

Etta (Semi-Structured Interview): Etta, an African-American female in her 50s, joined Prestige in the spring of 2010 (a few months prior to school opening) as the Director of Finance & Operations and fulfilled the duties of the CFO for the school. Etta was instrumental in the startup and operation of the school. As acting CFO, Linda was considered an ex-officio member of the board per board bylaws, attended board members, and sat on the finance committee. Etta has an

extensive background in school, nonprofit, and for-profit operations. She is a CPA that previously worked as operations director at the city's largest charter school organization. After several years helping the school through start-up as the Director of Operations & Finance, Etta was promoted to Executed Director and President to the board in Fall 2013 after the school's founding Executive Director relocated out of state. Etta held the position for one year before it was recommended by the sponsor that she should be removed and replaced. Etta was repositioned back into the Director of Finance & Operations role and remained there until she left the origination in 2015.

Joey (Semi-Structured Interview): The first semi-structured interview in this phase was conducted with Joey, a white male in his mid 20s. He joined the board during its inception and was one of the original business plan designers for the school. At the time when he joined the board, he was still an undergraduate student in business at an elite university in the area. He, and three of his peers, were recruited by the school champion as part of a business school class that allowed its students to support external business development projects for a grade. After working on the business plan, Joey joined the board in the spring of 2009 and remained on the board until fall 2010 when the board added a slate of new members and were advised by the mayor's charter office to remove the undergraduate students from the board.

Linda (Semi-Structured Interview): The second interview was conducted with Linda, a white female with an extensive background in nonprofit program management and community services. Linda joined the board in 2012. She operated as a lay board member for a year until a quick board transitions moved her to vice chair and then chairperson within a year's time. Linda was one of the last board members from the original startup board (board members from the first three years of school development and operation) to leave the organization when she resigned in 2016.

Karen (Document Analysis): The resignation letter that is being analyzed was submitted by Karen, a black female in her late 30s. She joined the board in 2009 and was part of the original founding board. She is a resident of the city of St. Louis, a licensed CPA, and works as a CFO for a major nonprofit in region. She acted as treasurer for majority of her time on the board, until she resigned in 2014 after issuing the letter that is being reviewed as part of the qualitative analysis for this phase of subgroup data.

Positionality

As a black male who was the first (and only) of six siblings to graduate high school, I am highly privileged to have had the opportunity to attend college and obtain multiple degrees from some of the nation's top universities. As a result, I have always recognized the impact of schooling in changing the course of life trajectories. Being keenly aware of the incredible professional, economic, and personal opportunities I have had due to my schooling – and the lack of similar of opportunities made available to my friends and family – I spent many years feeling an innate calling to utilize my credentials to establish educational pipelines that would help black youth improve their life standing. It was for this reason that I, and many of my community colleagues, championed and established the charter school that is the focus of this research.

As an African-American who grew up in St. Louis, and who was instrumental in the establishment of "Prestige Academy", I am highly invested in this line of research that seeks to understand how individuals must work against a myriad of socio-cultural and organizational obstacles to support black uplift. As a researcher, this motivation makes me partial in investigating organizational phenomena in that my goal is to focus on those voices that are often disadvantaged and identify the challenges that prevent such individuals from being successful; this is a necessary

57

goal for critical scholars who want their research to produce tangible recommendations that support the performance of marginalized groups and stakeholders.

Furthermore, as it relates to this study specifically, my desire to sustain healthy personal and/or professional relationships with many of the involved participants could potentially bias the way I frame questions and the crafting of analytic interpretations. I am aware these biases may influence the research process. For this reason, I remain acutely aware of, and intentional in safe-guarding against, attempts distort or deplete meanings and findings in such a way as to reduce methodological soundness. Concurringly, I also recognize that I have deliberately selected frameworks that can utilizes my positionality to participants, the site school, and the subject matter as a strength in the data collection & analysis process.

My primary objective for this study is to make a profound scholarly contribution that helps us understand how race and blackness impact relationships and experience in charter school leadership. Even though I have familiarity with this subject and the context of this study, there are numerous narratives and experiences involving board relationships (both good and bad) that I have yet to be previewed. Thus, I must always be aware of my positionality in this study and my propensity to sway the research agenda. This does not require me to disconnect myself from the context of this study – which in many ways would be impossible considering my history with the site organization; it simply mandates that I create a set of research questions that will guide the direction of investigation, implement sound methodological processes to collect and analyze evidence, then let the data, the selected frameworks, and the narratives of the participants tell their own story.

Limitations

As with most case studies, an understandable limitation to this research is restricted transferability of findings due to the uniqueness of contextual factors surrounding this case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Furthermore, having participants reflect post hoc on experiences that occurred two to seven years ago may cause some reliability issues. However, both circumstances are relatively common among qualitative research and case studies and most scholars agree that such limitations are acceptable if study methods reduce the impact of such issues as much as possible by utilizing comprehensive sampling and multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The absence of data provided by accountability stakeholders (i.e. representatives from the mayor's office, the sponsoring organization, or the state department of education) may also be viewed as a limitation for those hoping to understand how the powerholding group viewed interactions with Prestige board members and what motives they may have in these relationships. This would, indeed, provide insight into greater discussions in the charter school landscape for a more robust group analysis study. For the purposes of this research, however, we are more concerned with the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of the board members themselves as community agents. Thus, accountability stakeholder point-of-view is less important to us than perception of stakeholder actions from the point-of-view of the board member in understanding how that board member makes sense of racial influences within their board experiences. Additionally, Phase I's quantitative analysis is based on an N of 21, although this potentially represents about 10 percent of the total population, this may be considered a small sample upon which to base definitive empirical truths. For this reason, we emphasize that data presented in this section is not meant to be ubiquitously extrapolated to all charter and/or educational landscapes. Instead, findings are simply meant to provide a glimpse into certain patterns and trends that may

be occurring within our selected locale and contextual group for the purposes of understanding *if* and *how* these patterns matter within our site school.

It is possible that the researcher's positionality and pre-exiting relationships with many participants may have reduced participant openness, especially among those that believed their experience with Prestige Academy to be overwhelming negative. However, these relationships may also prove tremendously valuable, as the researcher will be a pry, push, and motivate participants to divulge more sensitive information and be able to ask more probing questions given the researcher's intimate knowledge of the organization, participant roles, and participant attitudes. Furthermore, both black and white participants from the site school provided very proactive material and shared highly personal experiences and moments of deep self-reflection, alluding that the researcher's positionality, in this case and with these participants, seemed to have a far more positive than negative impact on openness and trust during the qualitative portions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STORY OF PRESTIGE ACADEMY

The history of Prestige reads like that of a shooting star: out of the darkness of the night's sky a bright light bursts into existence and zooms past all the other stars that are frozen in space. But as quickly as it appeared, so is it swallowed up by the vast darkness from which it arose. This is the story of Prestige Academy, a small charter middle school in St. Louis City that dared to act on the vision detailed in its founding charter plan: to groom little black boys and girls into "prosperous leaders and innovators in the world of Art, Business, Civic Service, Medicine, Research, Politics, and beyond…"

The story of Prestige will be told in narrative format to create a nuanced portrait of the site from which the data of this study is taken. This will provide a contextual understanding behind the motivations and experiences of its board members. Auto ethnography will be heavily leveraged in this narrative. According to Russell (1999), auto ethnography provides a "commitment to the actual" (p. 1) and can be used as a tool to understand culture, looking at both created objectivities and false subjectivities. Auto ethnography supports the accurate understanding of phenomenon in action and shifting aspects of self within an organization's group dynamics (Hamilton, Smith, Worthington, 2008). In the first section of this chapter – "St. Louis City" – auto ethnography will be utilized only as a support alongside other relevant data and literature and will be cited in the narrative as "McAdoo Insight, 2017" to identify where such insights were leveraged. In the second section – "Prestige Academy" – autoethnography acts as the primary data source. This section is told as a third-person narrative and only includes citations where additional data outside of auto ethnography is used.

The use of auto ethnography as a method in this chapter summons readers to enter the "emergent experience" of research (Ronai, 1992; Charmaz; 1993). The author's authentic, relevant, and irreplaceable historical background with the site school necessitates the use of auto ethnography in the critical and accurate depiction of the Prestige. Nevertheless, this chapter also highly leverages data from the following sources to ensure the depiction of comprehensive story: news articles, school marketing documents, city historical records, school & state performance data, information from school & organizational websites, census data, charter association reports, board bylaws, the school's charter plans, and urban empirical research. The "Story of Prestige" is not part of the formal analysis of the study but is meant to provide a backdrop for the data and findings that are to be revealed.

St. Louis City

Prestige cannot be fully understood without first acquainting one's self with the history of the city in which it resides. St. Louis City is an independent, major urban city along the eastern border or Missouri. It was founded in the late 1700s as a fur and commodities trading settlement and, at its height in the 1960s, had nearly a million residents living within the city proper (Primm, 1998). Decades of urban flight have dwindled the city's population, however, and in 2016 St. Louis had only 350,000 residents. Nevertheless, those fleeing the city center found residence in the surrounding suburbs giving the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan area a population of nearly three million, making it one of the 20 largest metro areas in the nation (Primm, 1998; Hodes, 2009).

The racial history of the city is deep and complex; although it is located in the Midwest, much of its culture is influenced by the south. In the aftermath of emancipation following the Civil War, de jure social and racial discrimination in housing and employment remained common in St.

Louis (Gordon, 2009). Throughout the early 1900s, many property deeds included racial restrictive covenants preventing African-American residency. Black residents of the city were only allowed to live within two small neighborhoods for the first half of the 20th Century and city's residential de facto divisions continued well into the 21st Century (Cooperman, 2014). According to 2010 Census data, St. Louis was 49 percent African American and 43 percent Caucasian American. However, the African-American population is concentrated in the north side of the city, which is 94 percent black. Conversely, the central corridor and the south side of the city contain less than 35 percent and 26 percent African American residents respectively (St. Louis Pop., 2017). The north side of the city is known for having massive swarths of abandoned and derelict buildings due to the massive white flight after the lifting of restrictive covenants (Gordon, 2009). Additionally, the north side is unfortunately characterized by its lack resources and basic amenities such as hospitals, grocery stores, large employers, banks, and accessible public transportation (Cooperman, 2014; McAdoo Insight, 2017).

Figure 4 – Photo of derelict homes and business on MLK Blvd in northern St. Louis

Violent crime in the majority black areas of the city is among the highest in the nation. The St. Louis Metro Police Department reported 188 homicides in 2017, which is twelve (12) the per capita national average. Many believe this to be a symptom of the immense, concentrated poverty

in which the community is forced to live (Fenske, 2017). Census data revealed that in 2016, the median household income for white families in the city was $56,000. For a black family, however, it was only $28,000. As a result, one-fourth of the city's population lives under the poverty line and 70 percent of these individuals are African-American (DataUSA, 2017). This mirrors the drop in black homeowner rates over the past twelve years. The homeowner rate for black households in the city fell from 39.9 percent in 2005 to 29.9 percent in 2015; for whites, it only shifted by less than 2 percent – from 57.9 percent to 56.2 percent (Pavlova, 2017).

Due to its entrenched segregation, St. Louis became a hotbed for civil rights activism during the 20th century. Major and minor race riots were reported throughout the region as displays of civil disobedience met white resistance to integration efforts (Cooperman, 2014). Yet black residents continued to fight for more equitable resources and opportunities. During World War II, the NAACP campaigned to integrate war factories, and employment. Major court cases were won that aided in the formal repeal of restrictive covenants and Jim Crow based practices. As the Civil Rights area progressed, St. Louis' black residents were major players in pushing an agenda and fighting for integration within employment, criminal justice, workers unions, and schools (Cooperman, 2014).

Figure 5 – Photo of local protest after Michael Brown shooting

Despite decades of protests and a dedicated civil rights agenda, grievance and embitterment with massive racial inequities persist today. In 2014, the city hit a boiling point – along with many other urban centers across the country – after the police killing of an unarmed black teenager – Michael Brown– in an adjacent suburb. Racial tensions were put on edge as many black citizens believed the killing to be one more example of their marginalized standing within the hierarchy of the city's social structure while a large swarth of the city's white residents defended the officer's right to defend himself against real and perceived threats. This case, and countless other cases involving similar circumstances around police shootings, sparked massive protests in the city and forced open discussion around the city's history of race relations, economic inequality, and political underrepresentation for black residents (BBC.com, 2015). Many in the city began to reassess the role that schools play in reinforcing the city's disparities.

Schooling in St. Louis

Black residents of St. Louis have long hoped that public schools could help combat the devastating impact of widespread inequality. However, the city's public-school district is even more segregated than the city itself. While the city was roughly half black and half white in 2010, according to state enrollment data provided by Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS), 82 percent of the enrolled 25,000 K-12 district students where black and only 11 percent where white. Furthermore, that small percentage of white students who do attend district schools are highly concentrated within the district's top magnet and gifted programs. Some of the city's top gifted K-8 programs have upwards of 60 percent white enrollment. When not taking advantage of the city's highly-selective public options, St. Louis City's white population often find sanctuary within the regions private and parochial schools. In fact, St. Louis is one of the 10 largest private school markets in the country for this reason (Fox, 2014).

St. Louis' public district performance has been in decay for the better part of two decades. By 2007, the district was graduating just 56 percent of it high school seniors. There was a budget deficit of $24 million (after having a $52 million surplus just five years before). The district went through six superintendents in five years and was meeting only 5 of 14 state accreditation standards (Taketa, 2017). Performance outcomes had declined so much by this point that the state department of education took the extraordinary measure of removing the districts accreditation and handing district oversight into the hand of a state-appointed, special administrative board (Taketa, 2017). It was at this time that the city's mayor issued a formal RFP for corporations, nonprofit organizations, and community groups to develop innovative plans to start and lead charter schools in the city.

As the city's charter landscape grew exponentially for the next ten years, the district felt constant financial pressures as revenues dropped when students left the district for charter options. Facing heavy competition from charters backed by mayoral support, the district hired a dynamic, African-American male superintendent who agreed to lead the district during through its turnaround phase (Taketa, 2017). Within seven years the new superintendent worked to increase the graduation rate to 72 percent and district daily attendance to 95 percent. He restored the budget so that it boasted a $19.2 million surplus in 2016 and student test scores have slowly increased year after year. His efforts effectively moved the district from unaccredited to provisionally accredited in 2012 and then to full accreditation in 2017 (Taketa, 2017).

However, student performance within the district is still marginal and the achievement gap is pronounced. In 2017, 62 percent of the state's third grade students were proficient or advanced in English Language Arts; for St. Louis, however, the rate was less than half of that number with only 30.6 percent of students being proficient or advanced. (MCDS, 2017) As a result, enrollment

remains in a steady decline with parents either moving out of the city or seeking other, non-district educational options. The data is clear as to where most of these students were going – charter schools.

St. Louis's Charter School Landscape

The first charter school was established in St. Louis in 2001; by fall 2017, there were eighteen charter organizations operating 34 schools and serving over 11,000 students (MCPSA, 2017a). Thus, roughly one third of the city's public school student population will be enrolled in a charter making the charter school a major player in the educational landscape in this region. Organizationally, charter schools in the city seem to fall into two categories: organizations that are large, multi-campus entities which are operated by national management companies or grassroots founded schools managed by groups of community members.

The academic performance of charter schools in the city is mixed. Some charter schools are showing high levels of student performance and demonstrating significant year-by-year improvements in student test results. Others have achievement outcomes that are notably lower than that of the district. Specifically, 11 charter school campuses report state annual review scores that are lower than the districts. On average, however, students at charter schools across the city are slightly more proficient and advanced on state tests in both math and English Arts (MCPSA, 2017b). Charter schools in the city are also slightly more diverse, boasting a 2017 *White* student enrollment rate of 30 percent (versus 19 percent in the district) (MCPSA, 2017c).

A Unique Accountability Structure

Nationally, almost 90 percent of charter schools are authorized by their local school district (Shen, 2011). However, in St. Louis, oversight in accountability is the responsibility of outside

organizations – namely colleges and universities within the state – who play the role of charter school "sponsor." Institutions of higher education serve as accreditation agencies for charter schools in Central certifying that the school is fulfilling its educational obligations as well as the goals and objectives included in the charter document. The sponsoring organization has the privilege to remove the school's accreditation at will if it feels it is not meeting its obligation to students. Once a sponsor is acquired, the charter can apply and receive formal accreditation from the state department of education to operate as a public school (Little, 2007).

However, before a sponsor enters into a contract with a school, new charters are formally filtered through an aggressive review process that involves the signing-off of numerous external political bodies and powerholding watchdogs. First, the founding charter group must enter the charter development program managed by the region's charter association. Only organizations completing this process and receiving endorsement from the charter association will be invited to present their plan to the mayor's office. The mayor's office organizes a panel of reviewers to vet each charter group's educational plan. The panel is comprised of some professional educators, but the majority are simply men and women with political and economic standing in the city – at the time of Prestige 's mayoral panel review there were no African-American panel members (Little, 2007; McAdoo Insight, 2017).

After the mayor's review, the charter group is sent back to the charter association for further vetting and to receive the associations formal endorsement. The charter association endorsement is needed before a school can receive grant funding from the region's largest philanthropic funder of charter schools. The startup grant received from this foundation is essential for most grassroot schools to financial support startup activities. Only after all endorsements have been received (the mayor's endorsement, the charter association endorsement, and the foundation funding

commitment) will most participating universities take a charter's application for sponsorship seriously. Generally, failure to receive any one endorsement often create tremendous road blocks to sponsor acquisition. After a sponsor contract is signed, then a school can formal petition the state department of education for public school accreditation (McAdoo Insight, 2017).

School Closures

In 2011, a major charter management company that operated five charter schools serving 3,500 K-12 students in the city was forced to close when its sponsor rescinded its sponsorship; the sponsor sighted persistent student underperformance on state tests as its rational. Since that time, two grassroots charter elementary schools were also closed after sponsors withdrew support amid similar performance concerns. A third grassroots alternative charter high school for high risk students closed voluntary due to its belief that it did not have the resources to fully support the high needs of its student population (MCPSA, 2017; Taketa, 2017b; McAdoo Insight, 2017).

Figure 6 – Photo of former St. Louis charter school campus after closing

Out of the currently operating schools, three charter organizations continue to receive negative media attention for low state testing scores: one is a large, national charter management company operating numerous campuses; the second is a long-standing community charter school on the south side of the city located in a majority white neighborhood and has one of the highest

white student enrollments in the city; and the third is Prestige Academy. Currently, these three organizations are the lowest performing charter organizations in the city (MCPSA, 2017b). While both the large charter management company and the community school in the majority white neighborhood were established before Prestige and have exhibited low performance on state indicators for years, neither organization has been formally, publicly threatened by their sponsor with closure (Taketa, 2017b). Contrarily, in 2015, Prestige was told by the director of its university's sponsorship department that it had two years to improve results or it would face closure. The next year, the sponsor publicly informed the school that it was withdrawing its sponsorship. The school's leadership fought the decision by making a formal complaint to the university's oversight panel arguing that it was not given adequate time to produce meaningful change. The oversight panel agreed with the school and extended the timeline by one year. While outcomes on state indicators did increase within that time, it did not reach the goals established in the probationary contract. As a result, the sponsor will pull its support from the school and Prestige will close its doors forever in 2018 (Phillips, 2017; McAdoo Insight, 2017).

Prestige Academy

While the marketing materials for other charter schools highlight pictures of smiling kids sitting in the classroom or playing at recess, the stately, gold & crimson colored brochure for Prestige Academy features an epic bronzed statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. clinching a book to his chest and his hand raised to the sky. Much like this image and the man for whom the statue was built, Prestige Academy wanted to be nothing short of a beacon of hope for the black residents of St. Louis. For a moment, that hoped manifested, and the hundreds of students and families, as well as the countless teachers, staffers, and board leaders, marveled at what was possible.

70

The Birth

In early 2009, the original design team for Prestige was formed. The project was largely initiated by a group of African American, St. Louis professionals and residents (of which the researcher was the lead champion and visionary) along with a group of young, motivated undergraduate students (who initially agreed to join the project as part of a business school class that allowed students to work on external startups for a grade). Prestige was originally envisioned as a private, classical, high school. However, after becoming aware of an RFP released by the mayor of city that invited groups and organizations to establish innovative charter school models in the city, the team decided to transition Prestige to a charter school as a means of obtaining state funding so that students did not have to pay tuition. During this process, it was recommended by the mayor's office that Prestige start as a middle school because it believed the city's high school students were too far behind for an honors curriculum.

Prestige took the advice of the mayor's office and begin to refine its model and solidify its founding board. By mid-2009, the original board included four undergraduate students from an elite university located in the city (three white males – including Joey – and one Asian female), a black male graduate student (the researcher), a black male educator (Arthur), a black female CPA (Karen), a black female social worker, and an older white female with a background in nonprofits. Apart from the older white female (who was in her 60s), all the original board members were in their 20s and 30s, full of zeal, and ready to create a world-class school. Over the course of the next four years, numerous board members were added to the organization (including Julian, Etta, and Linda) to strengthen community ties and board capacity and/or fulfill the requests of stakeholders.

The Great Hope

When the school commenced on its very first day *ever* in August 2011, the auditorium was not just packed with 118 fifth and sixth graders, it was filled with close to 70 parents, board members and community members all excited to see the school come to life. Many of these parents found out about the school through recruitment presentations at their local community centers. African American founders preached about a school they would build where black students could thrive; a school where high expectations would be more than a slogan, it would be a programmatic mandate as all enrolled students would be expected to take the schools honors-only curriculum track. Students would be instructed in Latin and enrolled in debate. They would even learn about the contributions of great African Americans throughout history year-round (not just in February). Their uniforms would embody the lofty sentiment of the academy as they substitute the standard polo shirts and khaki shorts for embroidered V-neck sweaters with matching ties and loafers. The idea was to create a program that looked and felt like the type of school most black families would gladly pay for if they could afford it. The parents were sold.

Figure 7 – Photo of Prestige students at a local park

Parents were drawn by the passion of the black leaders, their awareness of the black St. Louis community, the inspirational nature of their background stories, and the vision they had for

black students; this parental excitement was reflected in the enrollment numbers. When Prestige opened in 2011, there were four new charters that year and two charters that just opened the year prior; they all struggled to meet enrollment quotas. Some schools were at 50 percent of what they had planned to enroll that year despite only desiring three of four classrooms full of students. Prestige, however, had exceed its enrollment goals and spent the first two months of school trying to figure out how to scare students and parents away by telling them this program will be incredibly intense and will require an uncharacteristically large commitment from families. This tactic, however, only increased parental commitment in the program. Parents of this 99 percent African American and 92 percent low-income school attended school events, PTA meetings, and teacher conferences at uncustomary high rates for the first year (Altman, 2011).

Parents were not the only ones inspired by the hope of Prestige, teachers were agreeing to leave secure, well-paying jobs to be a part of a school that did not even exist when they signed their contracts. They also agreed to work for lower pay and put in more hours than district school teachers all for the opportunity to be part of starting something great. Eventually, the students themselves got swept away in the inspirational nature of Prestige and were even wearing the school uniforms on the weekend as if it were sports apparel.

The passion, inspiration, and dedication of the entire Prestige community paid off quickly. Students at Prestige began to grow and very quickly! According to school marketing materials, the average 6th grader grew two grade levels in Reading and Math from fall to spring (approximately seven months). When the school received its end-of-year state testing results back for the first year, they realized that its students, who had started the year a grade level behind (on average), had outperformed white and Asian students in the host district in Math and Communication Arts, effectively closing the achievement gap. In fact, black middle schoolers at Prestige were among

the highest performing black students in the state and had outperformed their black peers in some of the region's most affluent suburbs (Prestige Marketing Materials, 2013; MO Comprehensive Data System, 2012).

Figure 8 – Photo of Prestige students participating in class

Prestige also achieved numerous other accolades in its first year: it was the only first-year school to achieve a budget surplus; it was one of only a few charter schools to meet 100 percent state and federal compliance; it posted tremendously high parental-approval ratings; and it maintained a daily attendance rate higher than that of most suburbs despite serving a severely low-income population with numerous economic and resource barriers in their homes and communities. After the first year, it appeared to many that Prestige just might be that "great hope" for which so many in the black community had been waiting.

The Exodus

After a stellar first year, Prestige was informed by its accountability stakeholders (namely the sponsor and the state department of education) that some fundamental elements about its program needed to change. For starters, the primary school champion who was functioning as Prestige's Head of School, would have to be replaced due to certification requirements (he was transitioned to Executive Director in the following year and a new school principal was hired). Furthermore, the school's Latin language requirement could not be taught during the school day

because the state department would not legitimate the class without proper Latin certified instructors in the school. Additionally, the extra teacher planning period that the school had built into its day had to be removed, the structure of the school's extra-curricular programs had to be reorganized, the way the school provided diagnostic testing prior to entry had to be revamped, and even the way school the school handled student discipline and in-school suspension required more certified oversight.

The onslaught of changes were often framed as "recommendations" being that charters are supposed to have autonomy over certain structural elements in their programs. Nevertheless, the board and the school leadership felt obliged in meeting the requests of stakeholders and began changing the program as mandated. The very next year academic growth had severely retarded. Along with the changes, came a slew of turn-overs both on the board and in the school. Some individuals simply had to leave due to capacity issues or other opportunities, but many of the schools founding team members on the board and in the school expressed frustration with all the change and wondered why it was happening.

At the beginning of the third year, the original school champion resigned from his post as Executive Director to pursue an out-of-state opportunity; he remained on the board for another year, however. Etta was invited to replace him as Executive Director. Frustrations on the board continued to mount and board members who had been with the school since 2009 and found Prestige to be a great personal inspiration to them felt the school had gone beyond the point of safe return.

By the end of the fourth year of operation, every original black board member from Prestige had left the organization, the school had had marginal growth for the third year in a row, and it had had three administrative leadership changes. Only two board members who had served with the

original school champion remained on the board, one was a white male and the other was Linda – a white female. Both individuals would leave the organization themselves within the next few months and shortly after they did, the school would go into probationary status with its sponsor. Six years after its opening, Prestige – the "great hope" for the black community of St. Louis – will close its doors forever.

Prestige represented a grassroots project around which the community could rally. The original founders were well aligned with the desires of parents in the community and many black families saw it as great opportunity to receive strong and relevant educational programming for their black children. However, a whirlwind of unexpected factors (including accountability stakeholder demands, changes in leadership and board members, un-invited changes to curriculum and programming, and more) squelched the school's potential to sustain its momentum. These factors, and the researcher's anecdotal evidence concerning board member frustrations, is part of the reason Prestige is an intriguing case study. Through qualitative analysis, participants will help the researcher make sense of what was happening at the leadership level in the school, how it was received by board members, and how board relationships and structures impacted school outcomes.

The slump in academic performance and pending school closure is not unique to Prestige, however. St. Louis has poorly supported strong educational outcomes across its majority- black district and charter schools. Also, Prestige was one of the last black-led charters to remain standing; nearly all the other black-led, grassroots charters in the region have closed. Thus, prior to unpacking the tensions that may have existed within Prestige's board and school leadership, *Chapter Five: Phase I Findings - St. Louis Board Members* will seek to understand how the charter board leadership environment looked and behaved across and within other schools in the city.

CHAPTER FIVE: PHASE I FINDINGS, ST. LOUIS BOARD MEMBERS

A quantitative analysis was performed on survey data provided by charter board members from across the city. This data is used to build the contextual backdrop of the charter landscape in which the site school and its board members are embedded. Being that the board members of Prestige are nested within the St. Louis charter network group, understanding of trends expressed within this industry-specific, geographical landscape will allow us to create linkages between site experiences and contextual influences. Data was collected using a survey instrument that asked demographic, rating, and Likert scale questions to respondents concerning four interest areas: 1) Board Composition; 2) Belief Systems; 3) Views on Board Purpose; and 4) Treatment & Discrimination. Summary of findings and analyses are organized and presented by interest area.

Board Composition

Board Composition data helps us understand what boards look like across St. Louis charter schools and from where do board members hail. This section will help us paint a high-level picture of the demographic and spatial backgrounds of board directions in the charter landscape.

Education

Unsurprisingly, board members in St. Louis appear to be well-educated with 81 percent of all board members holding, at minimum, a master's or professional level degree, as depicted in *Table 4*. However, a review of education levels by race depicts an interesting pattern where Black board members are concentrated around the master's degree level and White board members create a wider distribution across all levels of education. As seen in *Table 4*, 100 percent of Black respondents held a master's/professional degree, while 33 percent of White board members held only a bachelors and 25 percent of this population possessed a doctorate.

77

Table 4. _Education Level Percent Distribution by Race (N=21_**)**

	Bachelors	Masters/ Prof.	Doctorate
Black	0 %	100 %	0 %
White	33 %	42 %	25 %
Total	**19%**	**67%**	**14%**

While a larger sample size may reveal more diversity in educational levels within Black board members, this distribution may reflect both a qualification and an access bias occurring within the St. Louis charter landscape. In other words, the fact that not a single African-American had less than a master's degree when a third of White board members had less than a master's may reflect a point-of-view held by those responsible for recruiting and electing board members at each school that Black individuals require additional qualifications in order to be seen as suitable school leaders. While the positive impact of this is that you have a highly educated Black board population, an underlying rational for this pattern may be the belief that Black bachelor's degree holders are not qualified to sit on boards in the same way the white bachelor's degree holders are. On the other hand, White board members may simply have greater access than their Black counter-parts both professionally and educationally. Thus, White individuals who have may have been able to obtain employment at companies and in functions with only a bachelor's for which Black persons needed a master's to be seen as a viable candidate. This access bias may also explain the very high rate of doctorate holders in the White population as these degrees (specifically J.D.s and Ph.D.s) are very elite forms of educational achievements. Given the massive economic and social inequity permeating St. Louis's history, the pool of possible African-American doctorate holders is sure to be much smaller than that of White persons.

Service Length & Diversity

According to *Table 3*, the average length of time that a St. Louis board member will serve is 3.71 years and there is no statistical difference in the amount of time served by Black and White board members; albeit, Black board member average service is slightly shorter and more concentrated around the mean than that of White members at 3.67 years with a 1.58 standard deviation versus 3.75 years with a 2.18 standard deviation respectively. *Table 5* reveals that 82 percent of all board members believed their respective charter school boards to be relatively diverse. There was no statistical difference in the way Black and White respondents rated the diversity of their board, however, the 18 percent of respondents who did *not* believe their boards were diverse were all in the White group. Unfortunately, we do not know if these individuals thought their board was lacking racial diversity (and in what form) or if they believed diversity was lacking in other areas (such as functional or perspective diversity).

Table 3. Average Years Served on a Board (N=21)

	Mean	SD
Black	3.67	1.58
White	3.75	2.18
Total	**3.71**	**1.90**

Table 5. _Perceptions of Board Diversity (N=21_)

	No	Yes, A Little	Yes, A Lot
Would you Consider your Board Diverse?			
Black	0 %	78 %	22 %
White	18 %	55 %	27 %

Personal Connections to St. Louis

In _Table 6_ we see that Black and White board members seem to be employed within the city limits of St. Louis at about the same rate (33 percent of Black and White respondents work in the city). However, this seems to be where the commonalities end as Black board members overwhelmingly display deeper and a greater number of personal ties to the city in other areas. _Table 6_ reveals that Black respondents were nearly 40 percent more likely to have "grown up [living] in the city" and to have "children [who] attend school in the city" and this difference in response rate is statistically significant beyond a .05 alpha level as determined by a chi-squared analysis. Additionally, almost half of Black board members both "attend church in the city" and have "family who live in the city." However, there were no White board members who could attest to the same and the difference in response rate for these two items was statistically significant beyond a .01 alpha level. Furthermore, while not statistically significant, 67 percent of Black respondents also reported that they currently live within the city limits, which is a 25 percent higher residency rate than Whites respondents.

Table 6. *Summary of Chi-Square Analysis of Connections to City by Race (N=21)*

	Black	White
Lives in the City	67%	42%
Grew Up in the City	56%	17% *
Work in the City	33%	33%
Attend Church in the City	44%	0% **
Children Attend School in the City	44%	8% *
Family lives in the City	44%	0% **

This data seems to suggest that Black board members more often come from the community in which their charter schools' serve and, as result, will likely have stronger emotive and social ties to the city, its residents, and its schools due to their numerous lived connections with the community. However, White board members do not appear to share these same direct personal and social ties to the community they serve, which may result in White directors having an outsider position (both in the way they are perceived by Black persons and in the perspectives they bring to community education). This may have ramifications in the way the view their role as board members and in their experiences and interactions with community-linked, Black board members.

Belief Systems

Equity in Society

St. Louis board members share similar views on numerous beliefs concerning race, equity, and their community. According to *Table 7*, there seems to be a basic understanding that American is not an equitable society. In response to the prompt "I believe… in America, every person has an

equal opportunity to achieve economic success", the mean answer for the total sample is 1.95 with a standard deviation of 1.02 (on a '5' point scale where '1' is strongly disagree). Furthermore, most board members believed that race was a significant factor in one's success as responses to the prompt "I believe race has little impact on one's ability to succeed" boasted a below neutral mean of 2.14 with a standard deviation of 1.23. Furthermore, it seems that most believe that work ethic is not to blame for inequality, as most respondents disagreed with the statement that "low-income people do not work as hard as high-income people". Correlation statistics show no significant relationship with one's race or gender and the way they responded to these items.

Table 7. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Personal Beliefs' by Race and Gender (N=20)

	Mean	SD	Race *r*	Gender *r*
	1=Strongly Disagree		Black vs	Male vs
	5= Strongly Agree		White	Female
I believe…				
Every person has an equal opportunity for economic success.	1.95	1.024	-.234	-.427
In my city, black and white students are treated differently in school.	4.10	.831	-.373	.112
Race has little impact on one's ability to succeed in my community.	2.14	1.236	-.057	-.203
My city has long standing issues with race.	4.67	.730	-.405	.089

Schools in my community are racially divided.	4.33	.966	-.204	-.169
Low income people do not work as hard as high income people.	1.90	.944	.224	-.099
The pursuit of social justice is a critical need in my community.	4.29	.902	-.375	.201
I believe black students benefit more when they have black teachers.	3.24	1.179	-.490*	-.051
Some of the best teachers of black students I know are white.	3.57	.926	.441*	.286
Academic achievement should be the sole purpose of every school.	2.24	.889	.459*	-.288
I believe a great school can change a struggling community.	4.57	.507	.611**	.330

*p < .05. **p < .01. *(Significant Difference)*

Race, Schools, and St. Louis

This trend in perceptions of an inequitable society are also reflected in the way board members view opportunity for students within the St. Louis landscape. The vast majority of board members believed that black and white students are treated differently in St. Louis schools, that race impacts rather or not a student is treated fairly, and that schools in their communities are racially divided. This seems true across identity groups with no statistically significant relationship in how participants responded. Perhaps, one of the most telling observations in this data is the fact that the prompt "I believe my city has long standing issues with race" received a mean score of

4.67 out of 5 with a very tight standard deviation of .73 and no statistical relationship with Race or Gender. This data reveals a ubiquitous understanding that St. Louis is a heavily racialized geographical and historical space, one that is highly observable and recognized within the city and its charter school leaders. Thus, while perceptions of racial interactions may differ across stakeholder and identity groups, all groups understand that race is deeply impactful in the experiences of residents, and a leading cause of the inequity exhibited throughout the city. As a result, majority of the board members dually believed that "the pursuit of social justice is a critical need in [the St. Louis] community" with a mean of 4.29 and no statistically significant correlation with race and gender.

Race and Classroom Leadership

While there were no beliefs expressed through this survey that displayed a significant relationship with one's Gender, there were a few items that displayed a relationship to the dichotomous race variable (Black versus White). Two prompts reflected a moderate correlation in how Black and White board members viewed the role of race in educating black children and who is best suited for that role. The two items, "I believe black students benefit more when they have black teachers" and "Some of the best teachers of black students I know are white" both showed moderate correlations with race beyond a .05 alpha level with r's of .441 and .459 respectively. Thus, Black respondents seem to favor black classroom leadership while White respondents are more open, and even firm believers, that white classroom leadership can be just as beneficial for black children.

This finding is important because it potentially exemplifies identity-based group bias in the leadership of black education. While this bias is directed at classroom instruction, it may very well reflect similar bias in school board leadership where Black individuals prefer and believe Black

84

leadership to be better suited to guide educational agenda for black communities. Conversely, White persons, despite the critiques from Black leaders themselves, may see their contributions as valid and even a necessary authority in leading black schools. Thus, this bias may be more than a mere group preference but indictive of a conflict in agreement concerning the factors that are important in school leadership in black communities and, more importantly, the extent to which white persons neglect or reject the point of view of black leaders in defining those factors.

Role and Impact of Schools

With an *r* of .611, which was found to be statistically significant beyond a .01 alpha level, there is a relatively strong correlation between the dichotomous Race and the belief that "a great school can change a struggling community." With mean and standard deviation 4.57 and .507 respectively, all board members have some level agreement with this statement, however, White board members seem far more optimistic in their belief in a school being able to fully combat all of societies social ills; Black respondents, however, were far less likely to state that they "Strongly Agree" with this statement. There was also a moderately strong correlation between Race and the belief that "Academic achievement should be the sole purpose of every school." With a mean of 2.24, a standard deviation of .889, and an *r* of .459 with a statistical significance beyond a .05 alpha level, White board members were more preoccupied with restricting school purpose to measurable academic results. However, the cross-tabulation analysis of this item, depicted in *Table 8*, reveals that Black respondents, unanimously disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement; a fourth of White participants agreed with this statement and 17 percent were neutral or had no opinion on the matter. This represents a critical tension in the purpose of schools in the black community, most notably, being an agent to support community goals and initiates. While Black board members may want to see the school play other critical roles in the life of black children and

the community, such as mentorship, uplift, stability, social outlets, talent development, etc., White board members will be more likely to hold schools to meeting strict regulatory testing standards that may truncate holistic student development. This possible tension has the potential to create serious conflicts between Black and White board members when deciding school goals, plans, and funding allocation.

Views on Board Purpose

Many of the views expressed in board member beliefs appear to align with how board members perceived their responsibilities as charter school directors. Through the survey instrument, respondents were asked to select which *two* functions of charter board governance they believed to be their most important or primary responsibilities as charter school board members. Respondents were able to make two selections out of a list of 10 items. All items were taken directly from the charter board member job description created by the National Charter Schools Research Center and they were all deemed by this organization as essential responsibilities to support the development of strong charters. Responses were tallied ranked based on the amount votes each item received in *Table 9* within Race sub-categories.

Table 9. Ranking of Self-Reported Top Responsibilities of the Board by Number of Respondent votes (N=21)

	Black	White
Determine the mission and purpose of school	*1ˢᵗ Most Selected*	*1ˢᵗ Most Selected*
Select, Support, and Evaluate School Leader	*3ʳᵈ*	*5ᵗʰ*
Ensure effective organizational planning	*3ʳᵈ*	*3ʳᵈ*

Ensure adequate resources	*5th*	*No Selections*
Approve/ monitor annual budget	*7th*	*3rd*
Monitor progress in achieving academic outcomes	*7th*	*6th*
Be ambassadors, advocates, and community reps	*5th*	*No Selections*
Support community uplift and education	*2nd*	*No Selections*
Adhere to local, state, and federal regulations	*No Selections*	*2nd*
Recruit and orient new members and assess board	*7th*	*No Selections*

Both Black and White respondents selected "Determining the mission and purpose of the school" as a primary responsibility of board members more than any other item; thus, board members are, at minimum, aligned in understanding of the importance of having a mission-driven program. While both groups agree that "determining mission" is the most important aspect of the board, the two groups diverge quite a bit in the way they rank responsibilities after this item. For Black board members, the second most selected board member responsibility was "supporting community uplift and education", yet it received no selections at all from White board members. Conversely, for White board members "Adhering to local, state, and federal laws and regulations" was their second most selected function, which – in like fashion – received no selections from any of the Black respondents.

This split in point-of-view concerning the primary functions of a board reveals a deep conflict in board member purpose and motivations: while Black board members had a sincere, deliberate desire to view their board roles as community-focused servants and agents of change, White board members view themselves as overseers and/or compliance officers. This notion is

further supported by the fact that three additional functions of the board role as being community-focused or supporting holistic school operations, also received no selections from White respondents. These items included: "serving as ambassadors, advocates, community representatives," which received the fifth most selections from Black directors; "ensuring adequate resources," which also received the fifth most selections from Black directors; and "recruiting and assessing board members," which received the seventh most selections from Black directors.

There seems to be a fundamental disagreement in how directors view the role of the board in the administration and facilitation of black education. For White board members, serving the community and/or supporting community uplift through their role as board leaders is a non-priority. Neither is seeing and aiding in the school's development holistically outside of academic achievement and regulatory compliance. While Black board members are less concerned with regulatory compliance, they do appear to be concerned with fiduciary responsibility and effective school management, as they selected "ensuring effective organizational planning" the third most out of all functions and "approving/ monitoring the annual budget" the seventh most. Thus, Black board members appear to understand that effective school management is important in governing, but it is not their primary duty; their true contribution and responsibility is to the community and not the state.

Treatment & Discrimination

Forms of Adverse Treatment

Respondents were asked to rate how often they had experienced certain forms of Adverse Treatment from other stakeholders while serving as a director. Rating options were scaled and defined as the following: as "1 – Never Occurred," "2 – Occurred Once a Year," "3 – Occurred a

Few Times a Year," "4 – Occurred a Few Times a Month," and "5 – Occurred in Almost Every

Encounter." Mean scores, standard deviations and correlations with race and gender for each

Treatment item are recorded in *Table 10*. On many items concerning treatment, mean scores were

pretty low (showing low occurrence of that form of treatment) and there were no significant

relationships with responses on items with race or gender. These items included responses to

prompts such as: "as a board member, I was treated with less courtesy than other people"; "as a

board member I felt I was being treated as though others were afraid of them"; and "as a board

member other people acted as if I were a dishonest person". Thus, these forms of adverse treatment

did not seem to be a commonly experienced reality for Black or White board members. There were

three items that displayed a moderate to strong correlation with race, however; they included: 1)

"I felt I was treated with less respect than other people," which had an *r* of -.576 and was

statistically significant beyond a .01 alpha level; 2) "I felt people were more critical of my

performance," which had an *r* of -.640 and was statistically significant beyond a .01 alpha level;

and 3) "I felt my opinion was not valued," which had an r of -.449 and was statistically significant

beyond a .05 alpha level.

Table 10. *Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Perceptions of Treatment' by*

Race and Gender (N=20)

	Mean	**SD**	**Race *r***	**Gender *r***
	1=Never		Black vs	Male vs
	5= Always		White	Female
As a board member…				

You are/were treated with less courtesy than other people.	1.65	1.089	-.393	-.047
You are/were treated with less respect than other people.	1.85	1.137	-.576**	-.226
You felt people were more critical of your performance.	2.00	1.451	-.640**	-.141
People treated you as if you are not as smart/capable as others.	2.05	1.432	-.400	-.251
People acted as if they were afraid of you.	1.40	.940	-.263	-.436
People acted as if you were a dishonest person.	1.50	.946	-.382	.108
You felt your opinion was not valued.	2.05	1.504	-.449*	-.171

*p < .05. **p < .01. *(Significant Difference)*

Crosstabulations of these items by race, as detailed in *Table 11*, *Table 12*, and *Table 13,* provides helpful insights as to how Black and White respondents differed in their experiences with these forms of treatment. In *Table 11* we can see that 44 percent of Black board members said they were "treated with less respect" *a few times a year* and an additional 22 percent said they were "treated with less respect" *a few times a month*. Conversely, 90 percent of White board members said they had *never* been "treated with less respect" or had only experienced such treatment *once a year*. *Table 12* reveals that 66 percent of Black board members experienced others "being more critical of their performance" a minimum of *a few times a year*, with 22 percent of the group reporting they experienced this type of treatment in *almost every encounter*. For White board

90

members, 100 percent of them reported *never* experiencing this type or treatment or having experienced it only *once a year*. Lastly, in *Table 13* we see 22 percent of Black board members felt as though their "opinion was not valued" in *almost every encounter* with an additional 44 percent claiming to have felt that way at least *a few times a year*. Table 13 also shows that 9 percent of White board members reported feeling their "opinion was not valued" in *almost every encounter* (the remaining 91 percent rated this item as *never* or only *once a year*).

Table 11. *Cross-Tabulation of Respectful Treatment by Race (N=20)*

In your experience as a board member, you felt you were treated with less respect than others…				
	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	44 %	22 %	0 %
White	82 %	9 %	9 %	0 %	0 %

Table 12. *Cross-Tabulation of Critical Performance Treatment by Race (N=20)*

In your experience as a board member, you felt people were more critical of your performance.				
	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	22 %	22 %	22 %
White	82 %	18 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Table 13. *Cross-Tabulation of Value Treatment by Race (N=20)*

In your experience as a board member, you felt your opinion was not valued.					
	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	44 %	0 %	22 %
White	82 %	9 %	0 %	0 %	9 %

Discrimination from Accountability Stakeholders

  Table 14 is particularly telling because it highlights a set of questions from the survey that ask respondents if they ever felt as though they were being directly discriminated against due to their race or gender. Moreover, it also seeks to identify from what stakeholder group did discriminatory treatments originate (Fellow Board Members or Accountability Stakeholders). Respondents could report if they felt as though they had experienced "No Discrimination," "A Little Discrimination," or "A Lot of Discrimination." No significant relationship was found with race or gender when respondents were asked if they felt they had been discriminated against by Fellow Board Members. However, when the question was asked: "[Have] you experienced adverse treatment or discrimination from **accountability stakeholders** due to your **race,**" a strong *r* statistic of -.667 was found with the race variable – which was statistically significant beyond a .01 alpha level – revealing that Black respondents believed their interactions with accountability stakeholders to be overwhelmingly more negative and discriminatory than Whites who unanimously agreed that they had not experienced any discrimination from this group (see *Table 15*).

Table 14. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Experiences with Discrimination'

by Race and Gender (N=20)

	Mean	SD	Race r	Gender r
	1=None		Black vs	Male vs
	3= A Lot		White	Female
You have experienced adverse treatment or discrimination from…				
Fellow Board Members due to your Race	1.40	.754	-.328	.000
Fellow Board Members due to your Gender	1.15	.366	-.183	.140
Accountability Stakeholders due to your Race	1.40	.681	-.667**	.000
Accountability Stakeholders due to Gender	1.30	.657	-.518*	.156

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. (Significant Difference)*

Table 15. Cross-Tabulation of Racial Discrimination by Race-Gender Sub-Groups (N=20)

I have experience adverse treatment or discrimination from Accountability Stakeholders due to my RACE…			
	No, Never	Yes, A little	Yes, A Lot
Black Male	0 %	100 %	0 %
Black Female	60 %	0 %	40 %
White Male	100 %	0 %	0 %
White Female	100 %	0 %	0 %

Interestingly, with an *r* of -.518 at an alpha level beyond .01, *Table 14* reveals there was also a significant correlation found with race and the question "[Have] you experienced adverse treatment or discrimination from **accountability stakeholders** due to your **gender,"** even though there was no relationship found to this same question and the gender variable. A crosstabulation analysis by Race-Gender subgroups, shown in *Table 16*, explains this occurrence. The data shows that while there were no White board members (Male or Female) who reported experiencing in discrimination in this category, both Black Males and Black Females reported feeling discrimination based on their gender. For Black Males, 50 percent reported they had experienced "A Little Discrimination" from Accountability Stakeholder due to their gender. For Black Females 40 percent stated that had experience "A Lot of Discrimination" based on their gender. We do not have information on which Accountability Stakeholders they are referring to specifically, and if these stakeholders are male or female, unfortunately; nevertheless, this data reveals some clear frictions and discriminatory treatment of Black board members by Accountability Stakeholders on multiple levels that are not experienced by White persons.

Table 16. *Cross-Tabulation of Gender Discrimination by Race-Gender Sub-Groups (N=20*)

I have experience adverse treatment or discrimination from Accountability Stakeholders due to my Gender…			
	No, Never	Yes, A little	Yes, A Lot
Black Male	50 %	50 %	0 %
Black Female	60 %	0 %	40 %
White Male	100 %	0 %	0 %
White Female	100 %	0 %	0 %

Summary of Phase I Findings

From this data we can deduce that African-American board members are subject to experiencing (or at least feeling as though they are experiencing) negative and adverse treatment through their board relationships and interactions. A great deal of downright discriminatory actions may be manifesting themselves in the Board – Accountability Stakeholder relationships whenever Black Board members get involved with powerholders. This may be the manifestation of racial-power dynamics coming into play in a particular way above what is expressed between Black and White peer directors. However, these adverse treatments do not seem to be overt acts of aggression or challenges as all sub groups in the sample seemed to believe that they were treated with appropriate "courteousness." Thus, there is reason to believe that subtle cues are being directed towards Black board members from multiple stakeholder groups that is causing them to feel as though their presence on board and in the charter leader landscape is not as positive, inclusive, or appreciated in that same manner that it is for White directors.

Furthermore, Black board members express deeper, and more frequent connections to St. Louis City through family, church, past residency, and schooling. White board members often enter school board roles as outsiders, not having much connection or experience with the city's predominantly black community. This may be part of the reason Black and White participants differ in their views on "who" is apt to teach black children and the role that the board is meant to play in community advocacy and uplift. With an understanding of these tensions and recognition ideological rifts between Black and White charter directors in the greater socio-geographic context, we now turn to our site school to deep-dive into the board member experience.

CHAPTER SIX: PHASE II FINDINGS, PRESTIGE BOARD MEMBERS

This section uses qualitative data provided by former board directors and ex-officio members of the site school – Prestige Academy – to investigate the guiding questions in this research. A thematic approach is used to analyze and organize data from multiple sources (focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis); selections from the data are interwoven together to triangulate findings and deliver insightful and comprehensive narratives. While numerous patterns and insights emerged, four pervasive themes were identified in the data that highlighted the nature of board member experiences, relationships, and conflicts within and across race and stakeholder groups: **Community Motivations; Contextual Hyperawareness; Affirmative Representation;** and **Challenges to Ability and Legitimacy.**

These themes highlight the embedded nature of the Prestige board as an "unapologetically" black-focused leadership group operating within a charter, geographic, and historical context that privilege whiteness. Deep insights into the interactions, experiences, and motivations of black and white board members, and how these interactions often highlight white-supremacy systems and ideologies, are revealed through these thematic categories.

Community Motivations

Charter school board members are unpaid volunteers who generally hold full-time careers outside of their role. Many also have families and other volunteer roles that compete for their time. Since their capacity is limited, and the work of a trustee is extremely demanding, one must wonder what motivates these individuals to give so much of themselves to an uncompensated activity. For black board members -- as shown in research and Phase I Quantitative Findings -- their connection with their community was central, if not essential, to their decision to serve on a board.

Many black participants shared deeply passionate, moving responses that exemplified how their commitment to, and desire for, community uplift prompted them to pursue change for the students and families in the city. For them, their role as a governing director was simply a well-positioned opportunity to impact their community in a meaningful and relevant manner. This is illustrated when Arthur -- a black male and original design team member -- explained why he joined the board:

> *Arthur: I joined the board because I thought it was necessary for a particular need for this type of school in the African American community. Nothing like this had been established in the Midwest, as far as I know... I just felt passion for it. So to be a part of something like this, and establishing it, I felt as though it would be good for the people… Right now, the choices just don't support African American students' ability to learn. We need options that show our children they have value. The school was setup to make sure African Americans understood they could be Prestige lent. And they were, the first year they did amazing. That's not what you see in the public schools in this city.*

Arthur identifies his motives as being inherently connected to the needs reflected in his ethnic community (African Americans) and his geographic community (the city and the Midwest region). He connects himself to the plight of black students and felt pride in his ability to contribute something that would be "good for the people." Arthur continues by highlighting that the options in his city/ community were not adequate and that he desired to create a school that specifically helped black students identify and reach their potential. Karen – a black female and original design team member – likewise highlights a desire to bring change to the local community through her board service. In her resignation letter, she reflects on her rationale for joining the board. Within

97

her response, she echoes Arthur's sentiments and places her initial motivations for board service as being optimistically hopeful in her ability to support monumental change for black children in the community:

> *Karen: I joined the board with the child like hope of creating a better world*
>
> *for a population of inner city kids that would receive the great opportunity to attend*
>
> *a college preparatory school. As an opportunity to remove them from natural,*
>
> *spiritual, and mentally impoverished environments.*

For many of the black board members, devotion to community is at the heart of their purpose for joining the board and their responses reflect such. For them, this work is more than a job, it is a "calling" and a responsibility they must bear to ensure the students in their city know their true value and develop hope in a more positive future. In fact, being community motivated is so central to the purpose and intentions of black board members that many believed it should be a prerequisite to serve. This sentiment is reflected in a response from Julian – a black male who joined the board in Prestige's operational phase – when asked about advice he would give to other/future board members:

> *Julian: I guess the advice I would give, as far as adding to the board, would*
>
> *be finding leaders who are indigenous to the community. That they understand, not*
>
> *just from a head stand point, but a heart stand point, and an experiential stand*
>
> *point, what it's going to take to accomplish the vision. That doesn't mean to suggest*
>
> *that the board should be all black, but as it relates to finding white folks there needs*
>
> *to be a thorough vetting that they have a strong social justice lens, and not just a*

surface social justice lens. They need understanding, cause as we say in the black

community, some white folks are just knowledgeable enough to be dangerous.

Julian is asserting that having an authentic connection and understanding of black life in the city should be an absolute for board leadership at a black community school. He also alludes to the fact that not having a fundamental understanding of such experiences – and a corresponding passion – would be detrimental to the school's development and would most likely be a source of friction among board members (particularly board members of different races). Arthur supports Julian's statement by both reiterating the importance of community centrality in motivations and insinuating that people from outside the community may fail to adequately adopt the sincere community-focused mind set needed to support effective change. For Arthur, a failure to put the community first would be a deal-breaker if he were to ever consider future participation in charter school governance:

> **Arthur***: I would let them know [to] focus on the community. The community*
>
> *is what matters and that's who you're serving. Often times, the outside entities do*
>
> *not have your best interests at heart. They have other interests, but not that of the*
>
> *community. Gotta have the community be the focus, that's the only way I would do*
>
> *something like that again.*

Connection to the community is a powerful motivator for black board members and the lack of in-depth connection with the community exhibited by white board members and/or outsiders can create intense conflict within the group. For Karen, this tension in board member motives, and a failure to believe her white colleagues could authentically understand the intense

racial disparities and social issues of her community, was enough for her to draft a letter of resignation to her fellow board members:

>   ***Karen****: There was a time that I was confident in promoting Prestige as the change our society needed to help answer these problems. Today I am only confident that Prestige is not addressing these problems. This will be a hard challenge for you, particularly because your understanding of the real issues are limited… Of course, I continue to pray for the best of the school, board, staff, children, and families. Yet currently I believe my efforts are better spent in serving our community in other capacities.*

Embedded in Karen's words is an expressed commitment to serve the community. When white misunderstanding prevented her from achieving that goal through board service, she sought other means to achieve this aim. This highlights the centrality of community as the primary factor in African Americans' decision to govern charter schools: they are there to serve their people.

White board members at Prestige also believed that they could use their roles as board members to support change for students. However, the manner in which they discuss their decisions to join the board denotes desire to serve children in the community is generally second or third level after-thought in their decision to join the board. Joey is a white male undergraduate student who served on the board during the design phase. He joined the board after participating in a school project that helped the founding team develop the business plan. He mentioned during his interview that he initially had no aspiration to get involved in this type of community work. However, social connections and personal relationships with his classmates and with the school founder were the primary reasons he eventually joined the board:

Joey: Personally I didn´t want to join a non-profit. I had worked in a couple, I can´t remember where, but I thought I wanted to get business experience. Then I think I remember being attracted to the Live Nation team for one reason or another, probably because they had the cool factor and did music. I think the actual decision was a bit of social, was a bit of fear of missing out on what I could be a part of… then [I] heard that my compadres had all decided to go with the school and I thought I don´t want to miss out on this and, like, [the board] not have enough room so I remember sending an email to the founder and I believe I asked if there was still a spot left… The founder had a great smile and inspiring pitch and seemed like a good guy who wasn´t on some kind of power play and so it was kind of, kind of this person. He just seemed like, ya know, I remember, he just kind of just lit up the room. It goes back to people [and] feeling a sort of, kind of a vibe towards them.

In another section of Joey's interview, he mentions his excitement with the school mission and his desire to assist the school in improving educational trajectories for students as part of his motivation:

Joey: I was invited by the founder [to join the board]. The mission was exciting. I had already participated in helping to develop the sustainability plan and so I wanted to continue my efforts. And for a similar reason, I was attracted to the project as a school that could help continue students with educational outcomes and I am a believer that thru improving someone's educational outcomes you can improve their entire life trajectory. So that's what was appealing [in] the project to join.

While Joey sees the need for supporting student outcomes and wants to contribute to that process, he does not express the same level of passion and purpose in using his board role to fundamentally change the St. Louis community for the betterment of black children as expressed by many of the black board members. The primary contributing factors in Joey's decision were not community-centered but interpersonal. Like Joey, Linda – a white female from the operational phase of Prestige – stated her primary motivation for joining the school board was a personal connection to a specific colleague. Also, like Joey, Linda expresses a commitment to supporting better school options for youth:

> *Linda*: *[I joined] cause a friend of mine who was someone I respected and admired and trusted reached out to me personally and said, "Is this an opportunity you'd be interested in? We are looking to expand our Board." And so it was that personal connection to a friend of mine. I didn't know anyone else and I didn't know much else about the school. And then also, it fit into an area of mine that I had been invested in for a handful of years at that point, education, as a former teacher. I was working in the education sector at the time at Teach for America. I felt like I had some knowledge and experience. I'd done some policy work around education reform as well, so I felt like there was a match for my skills. And I also, ya know, was very invested in, and still am, in making sure that St. Louis is a place where every kid, especially kids who are black and brown kids, can go to a school that's going to make sure they reach their full potential. So I thought it aligned with that as well.*

White board members of Prestige, possibly due to their lack of direct connection with the local black community, were heavily persuaded by interpersonal relationships when deciding to

join the board. While many black board members may have also had relationships with individuals in the charter space that impacted their decision to become a board member, their lies within their verbalized reasoning something not readily accessible in the replies of white board members: a deep, personal connection with, and impassionate response to, the cause of serving black children in their city. White participants *do* express a desire to help students in the community – Linda particularly has shown dedication to the pursuit of educational equity in St. Louis through her career trajectory. Yet, while white board members look to help underserved students generally, black board members desired to help the black students in their community specifically. It is as if black directors view their work as supporting their *own* children instead of someone else's children; this makes the work highly personally and emotional for them. Julian highlights this point while discussing white educators' responses to a racially charged incident in the community by using the possessive pronoun "*our*" when referring to black children at his place of employment:

> ***Julian****: No one was really willing to support <u>our</u> kids in that way. Because of the tenseness of the situation, some of the white folks were saying, "let's just kind of wait for all the information to come out," but that really had nothing to do with how <u>our</u> students were feeling.*

Even though white board members are aware of racial inequities in education and have a desire to be actively engaged in the correction of those inequities, black board members bring with them: a personal knowledge of the life and experience of blackness; a deep empathy for African-American youth; and an intimate understanding of the consequences of living in a city like St. Louis. For them, their ties to the black community ensures their board service remains focused and sincere. Their motives are inextricably linked to the community the school serves, and the success (and failure) of the school is personal for them. This is because they themselves are part of this

community and are hyperaware of the unjust treatment in which their community is subject. This vivid awareness of the racial, geographic, social, and historical realities surrounding the community that Prestige serves has been identified in this research as *contextual hyperawareness*, and it is paramount in the perceptions and experiences of black and white board members alike.

Contextual Hyperawareness

One should expect that board members of any educational institution to be somewhat knowledgeable of the environment in which their school is situated. Perhaps they are familiar with the demographic breakdown of their neighborhood, income levels of the families they serve, and some basic academic performance scores of nearby schools. This fundamental layer of knowledge concerning the make-up of their environment is something that can be defined as "contextual awareness." However, for board members attracted to a school like Prestige, which has rooted within its developmental history and programming a deliberate desire to re-visualize the futures of black youth, directors' knowledge of their environment went far beyond an understanding of its statistical make-up. Board members at Prestige exemplified symptoms of "*contextual hyper-awareness,*" meaning that they were keenly aware of the multiple layers and players operating to sustain racial inequities in their community and filtered majority of their understanding concerning their experience within the charter school landscape through a lens of social, historical, geographical, and systematic racial tension prevalent within the school's environmental context.

Participants in this study attributed much of the current state of schools, race relations, and the disenfranchisement of black students and families to be a symptom of a larger contextual infection – racism. As a result, they understand their role as board leaders, and their interactions with other stakeholders on the board and across organizations, as endemic to a community that has

a legacy of treating black people unfairly. Arthur identifies the unfair treatment that he and Prestige founders received to be a result of this imbalance:

> *Arthur: I do feel as though we were treated a little bit different. I mean, this is still America, this is still St. Louis and it is divided. And whenever you have educated African American males leading the charge in mostly anything, but specifically when it comes to education, we always have to deal with something extra. If were progressing, it's still not good enough. It's somewhat disheartening.*

For Arthur, this knowledge of history and contextual impediments anchored his devotion to supporting black education:

> *Arthur: Educating black youth is important to me cause, given our history, it was something that was taken away. Now the problem is what's wrong. In our history we were not allowed to read and write or even learn and it's got a lot to do with what's going on. So now we gotta work twice as hard to try to establish a foundation as to why it's even important, dealing with the struggles of our African American family. So it's very imperative that we try to instill that [despite] all the hindrances that are involved in the African American community.*

Julian's hyperawareness of the context in which the school operates is so keen that when discussing his relationship with a fellow board member he stopped mid-speech to highlight the importance of St. Louis's racialized environment as a contributing factor in the development of this relationship:

> *Julian: I just think there were a couple of folks who were just going through the motions. They were jaded as it relates to education. They ultimately withdrew*

from the board. I don't know if they were burnt out or whatever the case may be. There was another person who – and I have to say, all of this is happening within the context of a mid-western city that was historically very polarized. There is a lot of a racism that impacts the way black people navigate the space as well as white people – But there was one board member who I believed had some internalized oppression going on and it affected how they interacted with even the other black people on the board.

Julian consciously embeds his relationships with other board members in the socio-historical context of the geographic landscape. He is astutely aware that systems of racism and bias are prevalent and are not simply distant nebulous phenomenon but are active in everyday experiences. As a result, he is able to effortlessly filter interactions through a lens of systemic racism to help make sense of outcomes. Much like Arthur, it is because Julian can recognize the various systematic and institutional factors to create tension and biases in race relations and race-based outcomes, he understands his role as a board director to be even more critical in supporting educational agenda that disrupt oppression and disenfranchisement in his community:

> ***Julian****: I think that there's a type of education that happens in our country that reinforces social strata. And so for me I think educating black youth is important from a stand point of interrupting the common narrative that we see in our country. But the education has to be of a different type and intentional to help uncover and help our black youth to understand the context in which they navigate every day.*

This in-depth knowledge of history and context in which the school is embedded drives many black board members to passionately advocate for community-focused leadership. They understand, readily identify, and fervently loathe the systems and powers that maintain racial marginalization. Black board member's feel fundamentally linked to the plight of the black community they serve. They routinely reflect on how context impacts their work because they are forced to constantly make sense of contextual factors and their negative consequences. This is highly evident when pivotal events occur that illuminate racial tensions in the city. In these moments, black board members are forced to analyze the impact of such events as it relates to their work, the over-arching narrative of black oppression, and their effectiveness in supporting change through their roles as leaders of a black school. The highly publicized police killing of an unarmed black teenager in the city -- Michael Brown -- and the consequential protests prompted such a response. While many within the greater St. Louis community saw this as an unfortunate situation or even a racially motivated event – black board members saw this as a symptom of a long list of similar discriminatory practices that affirm the absolute necessity of their leadership. Excerpts from Karen's resignation letter highlights this reflective process:

> ***Karen**: As an African American woman I understand the dire need for the vision of Prestige to be relentless in its efforts to ensure a group of young African American kids get an opportunity to attend and graduate from college. The life that these young people face is not an easy one and the recent killing of Michael Brown and subsequent rioting in our city is evidence of this. This young man paid the cost; by graduating from high school, enrolled in college and yet in still his best efforts and those of his family were killed. I understand this may be difficult for you to grasp, but the need for the VISION of Prestige to be strong is critical. The best prepared*

African American male could have their dreams halted by simply walking down the

street.

As exemplified in Karen's writing, contextual hyperawareness displayed by black board members is a highly emotional, passionate, and introspective process. It is often painful as it forces black leaders to acknowledge a dreadful reality: the black community is dying, and the white community doesn't get it -- or worst -- doesn't care. While black board members enter the board role highly optimistic, and even remain hopeful despite setbacks, they are all too aware of the challenges posed by their white-supremic environment. It frustrates them because they are knowledgeable about history and recognize that black communities are fighting powers well beyond their control. Julian believes one of the reasons these systems and their outcomes exist is because white powerholders fail to take a position of humility when trying to understand black experience and oppression. He also asserts volatile race relations in the city, specifically those exemplified through the protests and riots in the city after the killing of Michael Brown, results from this lack of empathy and humility:

> *Julian: I would just say, historically, not just in St. Louis, but in this nation, whenever you have a group of people who are oppressed, it is necessary for those people, who either directly or indirectly, descended of the folks who were the offenders of that oppression, it's necessary for them to take a stance of humility in order to listen and learn. While there were some folks in this city who did that, by and large, the governmental bodies and power did not do that. This is why we saw what's on the television scream across America because there are a lot of people in that community that were not just filling oppressed, they were feeling dismissed.*

And some felt they had no recourse but to turn to violence and destruction to get

folks attention.

Contextual hyperawareness is intrinsically linked to the community-focused motivations embraced by black board members. When events such as unjust police killings and clear discrimination occurs in their community, black board members are forced to synthesize these events into a greater narrative of their lives and the realities and patterns of unfair treatments of African Americans. For Linda -- a white board member -- Michael Brown was also a pivotal event. She met this situation with great concern and immediacy as the board chairperson during that time:

> ***Linda***: *When Michael Brown happened, that was like a kick-off to a series*
>
> *unrest in the community. Then [another police killing] happened shortly after that.*
>
> *I think even it was less than a year, or almost a year after Michael Brown was*
>
> *killed, there was [also] another incident [in St. Louis], I think it was another Police*
>
> *killing. And that happened to be on some of the bus routes for Prestige, so I*
>
> *remember thinking on that, "How are we responding?" Not just responding to that*
>
> *but [also] reaching out very explicitly about that to the school leader. I think there*
>
> *are a lot of things we didn't do right. If I could go back and change how we*
>
> *responded then, it probably would've went differently.*

Linda's response concerning her reaction to Michael Brown displayed sincere concern for the members of the school community. However, her reaction differed from that of black board members in two ways: 1) it lacked the immediate placement of this event within the larger contextual history surrounding the unjust treatment of black people, which is consistently at the forefront of black board members' recollections, and 2) it does not convey the emotional

109

frustration that black board members endure when they are forced to acknowledge that their best efforts sometimes have no impact on the people or systems directly or indirectly working to perpetuate racial inequities. Both Karen and Julian manifest this frustration after recalling the event. Julian discusses his frustration with white colleagues at his full-time job after the incident. Karen alludes to her frustrations with white board members at Prestige and ultimately makes the emotional decision to resign as a result:

> *Julian: So, my job was in a suburban public school context, majority white district. Sorry to say, and I'm not really surprised, but the response was very apathetic. Folks were not willing to have conversations, folks were not willing to acknowledge that an incident like this can cause trauma and stress to our kids of color. No one was really willing to support our kids in that way. Because of the tenseness of the situation, some of the white folks were saying, "let's just kind of wait for all the information to come out," but that really had nothing to do with how our students were feeling. So that was very frustrating to see. Very frustrating. But again, this is St. Louis, I was in a suburb of St. Louis were race isn't talked about intentionally, at all, so.*

> *Karen: In recent days I have spoken to colleagues, affluent African American men and women that are outraged at the blatant racism and injustice in our society. There was a time that I was confident in promoting Prestige as the change our society needed to help answer these problems. Today I am only confident that Prestige is not addressing these problems.*

For black directors, the board member role is not independent of their experience as African Americans in a racially oppressive context. They layer their experiences in the educational space on top of their in-depth understanding of racial bias in their communities. When pivotal moments occur that create volatile race relations, the pragmatic institutional response may lead one to find immediate, relevant solutions to remedy the situation. However, because black board members are hyperaware of their context, pivotal events elicit emotional responses grounded in the pain they feel when they reflect on the continual maltreatment of the black community and the inadequate responses of white stakeholders. As a result, black directors do not only want event-specific solutions, they want to overturn the historical pattern of black injustice. This is why community representation is so important to the board members at Prestige.

Affirmative Representation

Very much aligned with an awareness of context and a motivation to serve the community, board members were adamant in pushing leadership representation that accurately depicted the community and positively affirmed black students, voices, and identities. *Affirmative representation* was a concern for board members both within school leadership and through-out the charter landscape. This seemed to be one area where black and white board members were strongly aligned.

During her time as board chairperson, Linda states she heavily desired more accurate community representation on the board of a school that serves an all-black population:

> *Linda: You can't be an anti-racist institution without implicating finances and decisions about leadership and governance [to it]. Oh man, Sharry Hanes, you know Sharry Hanes [a charter school leader at another St. Louis school], she has*

111

this quote: "Education is inherently political." Which I'm like, "Yes, yes, yes!"... I think that work is essential. Sharry Hanes' school is definitely that and that has been a priority and focus of theirs since the beginning, although it's evolved. It's different because they did not start out as a, or they aren't, mostly an all-black institution. I think that their board make-up probably more closely reflects the students they are serving, where at Prestige, we didn't ... I mean that was something that I tried to make a priority when we recruited new board members. We brought on some more. We diversified our board a little bit, but, honestly, white people should be the minority on the board, I think.

Linda explicitly highlights Prestige's intentionality in promoting black leadership within the school. Even though Linda is white, she is embedded within an unapologetically black space and understands education's political utility in creating equitable outcomes. As a result, she embraces the need for a school like Prestige to support black voice; albeit, she admits that Prestige had not achieved sufficient black board representation, in her opinion, during her tenure.

Etta – a black female executive and ex-officio board member who joined the school during start-up phase – also shared her views on the importance of having accurate black representation in school leadership. For Etta, the need for black leadership is not just important for decision-making that promotes equity, it's necessary for the students and families to see professionals from their community in positions of leadership. This belief is grounded in contextual hyperawareness as she acknowledges the struggles of black families in the city their impact on developing positive self-images. In responding to whether she believed black leadership was important in the school, Etta replied:

Etta: I think so, I really do because African American families have so much that they go through on a daily basis… They need to see people like them. You can show them they can go forward and be something. And it's not that I can't do something because I'm black.

Board members at Prestige were highly cognizant of their need to display a board and leadership team representative of the black community they served. This was evidence of Prestige's origin as a purposefully "black" school. While other schools in the city certainly served majority black populations, Prestige -- as Julian states – is unique within the city's landscape because it is an "unapologetically" black school; thus, it requires the representation of black leadership to create an environment that is deliberately affirming to black students:

Julian: The goal is to be psychologically affirming to black kids, disrupt narratives, show them vision and potential; that can be done in any context. But as it relates to the politics, the structures, the red tape, I think it [a black lead school] is the best model to do that unapologetically, because the founders were unapologetically setting out to be psychologically affirming to this group, and I just think a lot of folks were uncomfortable with that in St. Louis.

Julian hints that supporting representation in school leadership and programming that mirrors and affirms that of the black community may trigger discomfort for white stakeholders in the city. While the white board members of Prestige never voiced or displayed any concern with following black leadership or with having adequate representation of black board members, Joey did express grave discomfort with identifying as a white person while governing in an unapologetically black school.

113

Joey: I think one major component [of my experience on the board] was a persistent white joke; that I was helping an African American founder start a school for African Americans but I consistently questioned in a kind of unproductive way what it meant to be a well-educated, well-off, white college person from the suburbs who was helping low-income African American students improve. Saying it out loud, it just seems like people helping people. But I was concerned and worried about having a type of like white savior complex and a white guilt complex. That´s something I would´ve liked to articulate and discuss more openly with the board team and to see if anyone else felt that way and to talk about that relationship. I think conversations like that would have improved my learning and my experience and I probably would´ve been better.

Joey reflects the concern that Prestige had for ensuring black leadership by questioning his own position on the board. He understood that the school was aimed to supporting black students and that he may not be representing the needs of the community in his board role because of his race. He also wondered if other board members may have felt this unease with having to represent a black school as a white director. Indeed, Linda voiced very similar concerns. Although Linda and Joey never served on the board at the same time, and their paths never crossed, they both expressed anxiety stemming from being a white "out-sider" embedded in a board group that was heavily invested in affirming the identities of the black community. For Linda, her experience seemed exceptionally uneasy due to her leadership position on the board:

Linda: Shortly after I joined the Board, I was suddenly the Board Chair, like what the hell! That was not what I signed up for, and I took that position because there was like a massive need for someone to grab at the reigns after a

114

series of events led to us having a vacancy in that position. But I don't know that I ever felt like I was the right person for that necessarily… I'm this white person suddenly chairing the Board with a school that is 100% African American kids and families, staff, a lot of staff members. So there were a lot of racial issues, ya know, yeah, racial issues too that I thought about in that position too… I can't think of any conflicts necessarily, but like I said, with being the leader of a board of a school that's all black, there were definitely some challenges there and bias probably.

Linda goes on to explain that, much like Joey, her anxiety stemmed from wondering if the school's stakeholder groups held favorable opinions of her leadership and representation. She was concerned that her lack of identification with the community would be confused with insincerity and that this might spur rejection from the families she was charged with serving:

Linda: I think the biggest thing is that I didn't really feel like it was a position that I earned. I think as a leader, you wanna know, in any kind of leadership position, you wanna know that the people that are the beneficiaries or the intended beneficiaries know that you care about them and feel that they can trust you. I had no indicators of any of that. And so, that was really uncomfortable… It was uncomfortable in that way, because I did not know that, or I had no indication that the people in the school – whether it be the students, families, or staff – trusted me or knew that I cared, that wasn't there. And there's a lot of reason for them to not trust me. I mean, there's a lot of reasons for black people to not trust white people. And so it's not something I can fault anyone for if they felt that way. It was just uncomfortable.

115

Linda displays a level of contextual hyperawareness here as well. She is cognizant that there may be group racial and socio-cultural barriers between her and the people she serves and that these barriers are symptomatic of larger contextual disparities, which have caused black community members to distrust white powerholders. Because of this, Linda felt that the potential to build trust with the community was eroded. Joey also believes that his whiteness was an issue with building trust with the community. Because of this anxiety, he steered away from making meaningful connections with community members because he feared he could not adequately represent them as an "out-sider":

> *Joey: I remember also, me being uncomfortable about any kind of, not forward-facing role, but interactions in the community where I may be perceived as some kind of like, white city slicker kind of person.*

White board members often found themselves evaluating their own position on the board and questioning if they were qualified to speak on behalf of the African American, St. Louis community from their role. This insecurity created a type of dissonance for white board members where they saw themselves as being leaders who were helping those in need yet were concurringly uncomfortably disconnected from the group they were helping.

At Prestige white board members seemed to openly affirm the need for black school leadership. This may be due to the "unapologetic" culture exhibited within the board group that promotes black representation and sensitivity to black disparity. The board may not have always agreed on decisions concerning representation, but when disagreements arose, the established cultural compass of the board tilted towards the protection of black voices and the affirmation of positive black identities in the school community. We see this exemplified in the data when Joey

116

shares his recollection surrounding a decision to turn down a "qualified" white male applicant for a board position:

> *Joey: We were interviewing a [potential] board member and during the interview process, there came a point where we found that the person, a white male, interviewing to join the board didn't quite believe that the students who would attend the school was capable of learning at high levels and having everyone in honors to that effect that the school was shooting for. The board member was otherwise qualified to provide basic guidance. And then during a discussion with the board it was our view that we shouldn't have someone on the board that didn't believe in the children and their potential to Prestige as a board member for the school… As far as the board, it was difficult in making a decision on whether to make this person an offer. We were split. Some of us arguing for bringing him on board because he was the best qualified… and would provide us a helpful voice. Another contingency was took that his skepticism about the students´ ability was a major red flag and [they] ended up winning the day as far as not wanting someone on the board that would potentially, thru their beliefs, undermine the work of the group.*

This example shows the board taking active steps to protect itself against threats that could destabilize a keen focus on representation that affirms the community. Furthermore, this example illuminates the referent power black board members achieved and used to create a group culture that promotes and protects black affirmation in director selection. However, this ability to influence representation did not extend very far beyond the boundaries of the board group.

While all board members were highly cognizant of the need to support effective representation within the school, black board members were confronted with inadequate images of representation whenever they interacted with stakeholders throughout region's charter landscape. Reflecting on his experience presenting the Prestige charter plan to the Mayor's charter school endorsement committee during the school's design phase, Arthur recalls being shocked and concerned by the lack of black representation among the numerous individuals responsible for assessing the school's potential:

> *Arthur: Thinking on the city, looking back on the Mayor's staff, charter board committee staff, there was only one African American person on that staff. Looking back, I'm kind of like, wow! Like, how much success do these people or individuals really want? So, I was like, what are we really a part of? Are we here just to hit their bench marks or are we in St. Louis to make a difference?*

Arthur's statement suggests black representation is not only important, but indicative of a group truly wants to see black people succeed. For him, the lack of black representation in this accountability stakeholder group – which was responsible for endorsing new charters for sponsorship pairings – reflected a lack of commitment to understanding the community and a lack of desire to effectively support black students and leaders. Moreover, it may also reflect a lack of faith in black ability to lead educational programming. Other board members expressed similar concerns that they felt that powerholders and fellow group members often challenged their qualifications and legitimacy as a bona fide educational leader.

Challenges to Ability and Legitimacy

As indicated by the post-*Brown* removal of black principals during early integration, a common and unfortunate consequence of merging black and white school leadership is the presumption made by those in power as to who is more qualified to lead. Some may want to believe society has progressed to the point where similarly educated professionals of any race or ethnic background would garner the same levels of respect, or even that black professional would be esteemed *more* favorably in programming aimed at meeting the needs of black children; however, many participants found this simply was not the case.

Etta reflects on her experiences at group meetings hosted by sponsors to provide training for charter school leaders from across St. Louis. She shares what it felt like to be an African-American school leader in this space and immediately recalls feeling undervalued and "squelched" by accountability holders:

> ***Etta****: One thing was that, we would have meetings with the other schools, then you would notice that the African American schools and their reputation was always squelched. You know, you'd go to meetings and it was always the schools that had white leadership, or non-African American leadership, those were the leader schools, and those were the [high] potential schools. But those that were led by African Americans were worthy of leadership by other non-African Americans but not by the African Americans [themselves]. I saw it at Prestige. I saw it at the International Schools [a charter network in the city with a black female leader] …*
> *I saw it at all those schools.*

Etta believes that powerholders in the greater charter school landscape were sending signals that black leadership was not valued to the same extent as white leadership. While Prestige

allowed for board members to create a space where black representation was deemed profitable and necessary, it did not fully protect board members from challenges to their leadership. As a result, the board member group and the charter school landscape precipitated environments that routinely subverted director leadership at Prestige.

Etta continued by asserting she believed much of this atmosphere, which de-valued black leadership capabilities, stemmed from the role of the sponsor but ultimately "trickled-down" to affect the school in other areas.

> *Etta: It was almost an expectation that those schools would not do well. And ya know, sometimes you get what you expect. And because if you're leading like that at the sponsor level with the board, then certainly, that's gonna trickle down. And it influences other people in the community as to whether they're gonna participate on your board.*

And trickle down it did. According to Julian -- who operated as the board chairperson during the last part of his tenure -- the board group itself often challenged the expertise and qualifications of black board members in an unproductive way.

> *Julian: I sensed a little bit of that dynamic at play, where folks were not really willing to listen and honor the expertise that everyone brought to the table as it related to board dynamics, holding our organization accountable, painting a clear vision, strategic planning, things of that nature. When we had conversations like that it was very difficult to move forward because there was always this second guessing that took place that then caused the group to be dysfunctional. So then we could not provide adequate leadership for the organization.*

Julian felt that his interactions on the board were met with unnecessary challenges to his expertise and that these challenges stifled the effectiveness of the board to work together and lead the organization. Julian continued to provide a detailed example of how these challenges manifested in board interactions. Julian explicitly attributes the questioning of his qualifications, and the undermining of his role as a leader, to racial dynamics at play on the board. In the following excerpt, Julian vividly recalls meeting resistance from white board members concerning his recommendation to develop a strategic plan for the school. Although he considers himself a highly-qualified educational professional (and he, indeed, has years of school administration experience and multiple degrees), he recalls the need to bring in white voices from outside the organization to push his agenda item through the board approval process:

> *Julian: I'm reminded of a story a friend of mine told me. He lives in Texas and at the time I think he worked in an electronics store. He would always share with me – he's a funny guy – but he always tells me about racist interactions he has down in Texas. [He said] There was a white lady who called and was having an issue with her phone. He told her the solution and that was not sufficient. And he shared this inside joke with a coworker who was white, and he said, let me give you this phone so she can hear it from a white person. So, his coworker basically told her the exact same thing and she was fine. I use that story to share an incident we had on the board, well not really an incident but just something I noticed. I don't know if I'm totally on base here and it goes back to strategic planning. At the time I was serving as president of the board and as a person with experience in education I knew one of the things that was important is that we had, you know, not a vision, we already had a vision, but some framework with which we could*

121

actualize the vision. In public education we call that CSIP – comprehensive school

improvement plan for the entire district, 3 to 5 years out. This is what I was trying

to implement. As I was having conversations with some of the members of the

board, it seemed to fall on deaf ears. So, what I proceeded to do was get another

organization to come in and explain that. These people were white, and when they

came in and essentially explained everything that I was saying, then all of a sudden

it was well received. So, for me that seemed like a situation where race was very

salient, and these are people who on the surface would profess to be progressive

liberals. But in actuality or as it plays out on a day to day they still function out of

certain biases and kind of a racist lens, if you ask me.

Black board members often walked away from formal interactions with white board members feeling as though they were perceived as inferior or less capable. Julian highlights this struggle by detailing his clear expertise within a particular function, yet, despite his apt knowledge his fellow board members did not embrace his insights in the same way they did when those insights came from a white person. It is important to consider that there may have been other factors contributing to the lack of buy-in from the board members in this scenario. The depiction does not provide us with insights concerning delivery style, supporting documents used, or relevant questions raised by other members. In fact, Julian himself admits that he also could not fully be sure as to whether race was the primary contributing factor to their denouncement of his recommendation by stating, "*I use that story to share an incident we had on the board, well not really an incident but just something I noticed. <u>I don't know if I'm totally on base here</u>…*" Thus, Julian is left to interpret the ambiguity presented by this event for himself. He was able to identify

their behaviors and the outcome, but without insight into their actual thoughts, he could not, with certainty, say that the board undervalued his qualifications.

While Julian is left to conjecture about the underlying sentiments of white board members, Joey provides insight that affirms Julian's fears – that some board members, in fact, did question the qualification of Prestige 's black directors. During the interview, Joey had a moment of self-reflection where he opened-up about how he realized he had slightly biased views of some African American board members and potential candidates. He unconsciously believed them to be less qualified due to the level of prestige (or lack thereof) of the college they attended or even the way they spoke or debated:

> *Joey: When we were considering and when we hired other board members, there was a combination of race, kind of socio-economic background, and then school experience that played a role, that definitely influenced my perception of board members. I remember certain board members, and some of them were African American, didn´t have the same backgrounds as, or they didn´t have prestigious school backgrounds, or they didn´t have extensive accolades. And then, even they didn´t argue as effectively or have some of the same type of education as some of the other board members and so that, as far as board member's confidence influenced my perception of their qualifications and it affected the way that I wondered what their qualifications were and what, like, how they were chosen. And I think that race was part of that, and race was part of that mix in terms of the evaluation and certain things that come along with race in terms of education, opportunity, the way a person talks in an argument, stuff like that.*

Joey's realization highlights the coded manner in which privilege can challenge black legitimacy via deferring to elite affiliations. Joey's biases stemmed from his black peers not having gained access to elite institutions and not employing the style of speaking utilized at these institutions. This lack of identification with elite institutions, which for many black community members is symptomatic of their restricted opportunities, can help powerholders substantiate critiques of black leader legitimacy.

While Julian and Joey did not serve on the board at the same time – thus Joey's comment cannot be directly connected to Julian's concerns with his strategic plan initiative – the insight provided here is extremely valuable in that it affirms what Julian believed but could not confirm for himself. Furthermore, this undermining of black leadership is not something that could be directly addressed because it was actively kept hidden. Joey, continuing his self-reflection, describes the process he went through to try and hide his presumptions from the rest of the board:

> *Joey: At the time it would be something that I recognized… Not a bad feeling of, but I felt like, not great that I was having these feelings and they were influencing my perception and my judgement. At the time, the best I could do was try, is try to keep anyone from discovering that I had [these] perceptions and try to kind of hold them back or just keep them privately. I think, just having additional life experiences over time both after the school experience, the board member experience and in other parts of life… [provided me] an expanded view how one, kind of, perceives another person. I think it's a process that takes time and experience and exposure to a broader range of experiences.*

What Joey exemplifies in his response is that black leaders' fears of being deemed illegitimate or less qualified is not in their heads. Although white stakeholders are attempting to hide their sentiments, black board members are yet able to make meaning of their subtle cues and recognize when white stakeholders have unfavorable depictions of their abilities.

Challenges to legitimacy did not only extend to black board members, however. Systems of power are multi-layered and, as a result, many white Prestige board members often felt their legitimacy being challenged from above, namely from two accountability stakeholder groups: the sponsor and the mayor's office. Joey recalls how the board felt pressure from the mayor's office to appear more legitimate as they progressed through the start-up phase by bringing on more "seasoned" professionals to compensate for some of its younger board members. This was done to appease accountability powerholders and Joey believes, ultimately hurt group relationships and cohesion:

> *Joey: I was a junior in a meeting with Mayor´s office talking about starting a Charter school… There was some stage where our board went to starting to get stuff off the ground like us getting school locations and stuff like that. [At that] period the Board, it had to become more of a legitimate in the eyes of the state. I don´t think these were the exact words, but the chairman, and the vice chairman, and generally the board, later moved to bring on more seasoned folks that have a college degree or already graduated and have experience…. At [the beginning] there was core, say, a central group of the people in their early 20´s on the Board that had worked together and planned together and I believe the board founder and the board vice chair were more relatable to the people in their 20´s and so that was a good crew. And then there was another group during my time that was more from,*

recruited from the community work and social work and parents and what not. And

so, on a social front, there was less, less relatability in terms of life phase.

Joey alludes to the fact that his age represented a threat to the school's legitimacy when it started operations on more serious startup activities. He also alludes to the fact that, in his opinion, the move to add on additional members for the sake of appearing more legitimate to powerholders may have weakened board relationships and ultimately was detrimental.

Linda reveals how she felt her legitimacy was insulted by the sponsor because of her gender and her affiliation to Prestige. Linda recounts her relationship with the sponsor representative (Barry) – an older white male. In one encounter Linda had informed Barry that one of the white male board members at Prestige (the only white male board member at that time) was resigning; Barry's response caused her a bit of alarm:

> ***Linda****: I also feel like there was some like, some subtle (pause). Barry's another white guy. And even like, I feel like there was some subtle like sorts of racist and sexist attitudes even that were pervasive. So, I remember when Jack stepped off the Board. Barry was like, that's a big loss for you all. You need to find someone that brings the same 'gravitas' that Jack brings, he kept using that word [gravitas], and I'm like, "what does that mean?" To me that's very like, I love Jack, but what does that mean though? That really stuck with me. So, I think that was probably at play too, for sure.*

Although Linda is white, and there were other white females and black professionals still on the board at the time of this event, the sponsor representative inferred that the lack of a white male presence specifically, somehow made Prestige's leadership less honorable. Herein we see the

interplay between race and gender as it relates to leadership legitimacy. The use of the word 'gravitas' is highly significant as well in that it, again, denotes reliance on elitist values and verbiage to discredit legitimacy. Linda continues and asserts that she believed the sponsored did, in fact, under value the expertise and experiences of the board members at Prestige and explains his sentiments as a desire to favor leaders who have money or position of greater influence in the city:

> *Linda: I think he [Barry, the sponsor] wanted to see people with money and access and I think that the board and the school probably what they needed more – we needed resources don't get me wrong – but I also think that there was an under valuing of context expertise. People with professional experience in the education system of St. Louis, or people with life experience as a black person in St. Louis or that sort of thing gets undervalued by stakeholders like our sponsor. So, I think that there's a lot of bias tapped into what it means to be qualified on a charter school board that is serving minority students.*

Linda affirms that powerholders devalue both the professional skillsets and the inherent community knowledge that board members at a school like Prestige have to offer. Furthermore, that the clearly favor whiteness, eliteness, position, and even maleness. As a result, Prestige directors – and specifically black directors – endure an onslaught of direct and indirect attacks to their right to hold their position. Julian believed that the underlying motivator of challenges to black leadership legitimacy is the inflated ego of white powerholders who see themselves as superior, the consequences of which is a breakdown in communication:

127

Julian: I think that the dynamic that I observed from perspective, the interplay between some of the board members of color, and the board members who were white – there was a disposition that I believe is prevalent in our area and our city. That is typically when you have setting like that – business professional and educational - there's a mindset that when you have an urban failing school district, and you know, then you have white folks come in and they are instantly the experts to the point that they either knowingly or unknowingly adopt a mentality that's like a savior complex or a God complex. And this creates a situation where then, well, they just don't listen. They don't, essentially respect the expertise that other people of color bring to the table.

As denoted by Julian, powerholders and white stakeholders may have an underlying desire to take control of black school agenda because they seem themselves as being inherently better at it; he is not alone in this belief. Many Prestige directors complained about how the original agenda of the school was constantly being changed or managed by powerholders, which was indicative of the board's leadership and legitimacy being subverted. Arthur discussed feeling as though constant management and interference from accountability stakeholders concerning Prestige's design was highly debilitating to the school's success and he even echoes Joey's assertion that influence from the Mayor's office to add new, more legitimate-looking, board members to gain their endorsement was unbeneficial:

Arthur: One hard thing, being a public entity, having someone to answer too, someone, for example a sponsor and certain individuals who helped fund the school. We had to answer the people who did not understand the vision. In essence, they caused us to go backwards from where we started… In the beginning I thought

128

the relationships with our board members was very, very good. Between blacks and whites, males and females, it was very good. We had the vision in sight as far as where we were going with our goals. However, when we were kind of forced [by the Mayor's office] to add on new members, it got kind of icky. We were dealing with people that didn't have our vision.

Arthur further demonstrated how powerholders subverted Prestige's leadership and wielded control over agenda items by discussing how it felt like the school kept losing essential elements of its program because of powerholder recommendations:

Arthur: We were going forward, we were progressing. We had results to show it. However, it seemed like each year we went on it was something- a pillar or a part of the foundation – it felt like it was being taken away. For what reasons, I don't know, I just saw it happen. It's something to be said when you have students going from an elementary reading level up to a college reading level in a year, maybe two years. But that was my big frustration, just, being asked to steer away, instead of adding on to what Prestige originally stood for.

Arthur describes a pattern of subversion in which stakeholders would undermine board leadership and control the school's agenda via taking away essential elements of the school; elements that were pivotal, in his mind, to the success of the school model. Julian likewise believed that the board leadership was undermined by outside accountability stakeholders who sought to change and control the school's programmatic elements:

Julian: It does seem like as if there were groups and bodies by these folks who were highly interested in what was going on at [Prestige]. They needed to get

into the inner workings of it to try and figure things out and, I don't know if dismantle is the right word, but because of the first-year success – drastic, shockingly awesome success – it got a lot of attention. And I think there are some folks who logically should have been celebrating that, but in real life as it relates to some of the dynamics and some of the things I have shared before in terms of certain folks having to have control and be the savior, that narrative of educated black men, coming into the inner city and doing what folks haven't been able to do in twenty years, was, I believe, threatening… it didn't take long before, like Arthur said, things started to be taken away. Things started getting removed from the inner workings and frameworks in which leadership crafted in order to get kids caught up quickly, all of that seemed to be strategically taken away; kind of stripped away. And as a result, the performance went down.

The sponsor and accountability stakeholders throughout the charter landscape seemed to actively impose on the governing powers of the Prestige board often acting in a way that undermined the very vision of Prestige, which was setup by its founding board to be an affirmative environment for black voices. Etta affirms this observation and is quite direct in her belief that she does not feel that the sponsor or charter school boards are encouraging or supportive of black leadership:

> ***Etta***: *There is a point at which the boards, and their influencers, tend to [say], "I want to educate an African American child, but I don't necessarily want an African American leader at that level influencing… [so] let's squelch the African American leaders, and keep them under a certain amount of control. And then when we get them, if we can't control them, let's get rid of them"… I found that we've had*

130

the flare of the sponsors. They would look for success in their own career, in their

own career path, and the African American led schools were not sitting high

enough, or represented enough in terms of their production, that they or that the

sponsor wanted to get behind it.

Black board members at Prestige fought desperately to design and create an environment that was affirming to black students; yet, black leadership was consistently challenged and deemed insufficient. Black leaders saw their governing, decision-making, and program design autonomy restricted and overturned in numerous ways. Even white females and younger white males felt the sting of legitimacy challenges at the hand of powerholders who desired to see a more traditional, older, white male face at the helm of school governing operations. As a result, board members expressed tremendous concern and frustration as they were constantly bombarded with systematic, interpersonal, and contextual challenges that inferred and propagated views of black inferiority and white supremacy among charter landscape stakeholders. For some black leaders, the perpetual fight against white supremic views of black leadership, and a lack of sufficient power and input, inevitably resulted in black surrender – as seen is Karen's resignation letter:

> ***Karen****: After being on the Board of Directors for five years, I have seen the*
>
> *changes in the administration, the board of directors, students, and the culture/city*
>
> *we live in. I have expressed my disappointment over the numerous leadership*
>
> *changes as a result of the departure of [The Founder]. I have also expressed my*
>
> *dissatisfaction with the board on the recent position changes and the direction in*
>
> *managing the school. At this point I believe we need to agree to disagree.*

Summary of Phase II Findings

The findings in this chapter highlight salient themes connected to the role of race as it relates to board member experiences and understanding of their role. These themes affirm that race is not only important in board member engagements, but it greatly impacts the structure and perceptions of relationships both among board members and between boards and accountability powerholders. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the inextricable impact of contextual embeddedness of board members serving in a black school that operates in a racially segregated city with majority white powerholders. Four major themes emerged in the findings: community motivations; contextual hyperawareness; affirmative representation; and challenges and ability and legitimacy.

Community Motivations

Community motivations are central to how black board members both perceive their role and decide to serve on boards. For black board members, board leadership is emotional and passionate. It is linked to their desire to contribute to a community with which they have life-long connection and intimacy. Conversely, black community motivations also complicate their board roles when they are reminded that systems and institutions, including the charter landscape, regularly fail black people. They utilize their board role to attempt change, but through their board role, they see just how difficult change is when white powerholders consistently resist or undermine their efforts.

White board members view community service as integral to their roles but fail to share the same passion and emotive connections to the community. As a result, community motivation is generally an after-thought, and not the central factor, in their decision making. White board

132

members inability to empathize or understand black community struggles, cultural nuances, and needs with the same level of intimacy as black board members was also identified as a source tension among board members.

Contextual Hyperawareness

Board members at Prestige exhibited contextual hyperawareness in their roles, meaning they were not only aware of their immediate school and board context but they were highly knowledgeable as to how their roles are impacted by the nebulous, socio-geographic context in which the school is embedded. Black and white board members offered unsolicited insights on how the racialized, political & historical landscape of St. Louis (and the nation) directly and indirectly influence educational philosophies, perceptions of board roles, interactions with peers and powerholders, and understandings of interpersonal interactions. Black board members, specifically, regularly filter experiences through larger contextual lens to explain latent and salient tensions between peers and accountability stakeholders.

Affirmative Representation

Black and White board member were keenly aware of – and supported – the need for affirmative representation on the board; thus, board members believed it was necessary to be intentional in promoting black leadership to effectively serve black students and families. To some extent, this stance is the effect of Prestige's founding board unapologetically establishing itself as a school for the promotion of black excellence. As a result, the board took certain protective actions to vet new members for alignment with this purpose, when able. A consequence of affirmative representation, however, was regularly expressed discomfort experienced by white board members. While white board members expressed desires to serve communities in need, they felt out-of-place in situations where they had to interact with community members or represent the

133

board in a formal way before community. Because the board strongly believed that black leadership was essential to serving black communities, white board members often feared that community members would not trust their motives. As a result, white board members reduced their interactions with community members.

Challenges to Ability and Legitimacy

One of the most telling findings from this chapter is the level of ability questioning black board members endured. Black board members reported receiving subtle and overt cues from peers, the school sponsor, and the mayor's office, that their ability to effectively guide educational agenda was deficient. Accountability stakeholders regularly subverted the board's leadership by constantly mandating changes with which the board did not agree or understand, and by treating black leaders of black schools as "second-rate." Most black board members felt as though their role as a governing leader was restricted due to constant challenges to their leadership, undermining of their professional and community experience, and underestimation of their abilities by both accountability stakeholders and fellow white board members. Legitimacy challenges from accountability stakeholders were also expressed across the intersection of race and gender as the study's white female participant shared what she described as latent racist and sexist ideals expressed to her by the school sponsor. Ultimately, this chapter affirms the long-standing practice of white systems and powerholders to favor white leadership (and undermine black autonomy) in black schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY

Literature and history painfully reveal a history of black school leadership being resisted, silenced, and/or eliminated. As a result, this research originated with a desire to understand how race impacts the experience, perceptions, and relationships for board leaders in the contemporary setting of an unapologetically black charter school operating in a racially divided city. *In Chapter One: Introduction*, the researcher recognizes America's persistent failure to create equitable education systems for African Americans and identifies charter schools as a growing key contributor to black schooling. However, with a lack of understanding as to how charter schools work to support, or hinder, effective leadership in black schools, the researcher establishes the purpose of the study as two-fold: 1) to explore the experience of urban school board members within the context of a burgeoning charter school landscape and identify key themes that highlight the role that race plays in board leadership and governing experiences; and 2) highlight the unique perspectives, experiences, and contributions provided by African American board members while unearthing the challenges black leaders may face when confronted by white systems, stakeholders, and ideologies covertly embedded within the charter systems. To achieve this purpose the researcher undertook a case study analysis of an urban charter guided by the following primary question: "*if*, and in *what* ways, do board members view race as being significant in their board experiences and *how* does race and socio-geographic context impact board member perceptions, interactions, and engagement as charter school leaders."

Chapter Two: Literature Review synthesizes the history and formal research surrounding African-American schooling and leadership, school boards, and the charter school landscape. Supporting literature was identified and categorized under three (3) section headings: 1) Leadership, Control & Black Schools; 2) The Charter School Movement; and 3) School Boards &

Board Diversity. Under "Leadership, Control & Black Schools," the researcher highlighted the long-standing struggles of African Americans to direct and control education in their communities and the resistance of white powerholders and white-supremic systems to faithfully integrate schools or facilitate community control. This section also recognized the large body of literature by black critical scholars affirming the benefits of black leadership for students and parents.

The charter school movement section defined the structure and growth of current educational reform and identified notable black organizations that have utilized charter models to support community uplift. This section also highlighted the numerous scholarly critiques of charter schools, including their tendencies to further stratify students, promote market-based education, and failure to produce consistent academic improvement. The school boards and board diversity section highlighted the history of the traditional public-school board and the benefits of diversity in corporate boards. The chapter concludes by recognizing the lack of research devoted to understanding the prevalence and impact of race and racialized contexts in board member interactions and governing experiences.

In *Chapter Three: Research Methods*, the author details the methodology by which the study aims to understand the role of race in charter school board member experiences. The chapter describes the frameworks that were applied (Embedded Intergroup Relations Framework and Critical Race Theory) and the research approach (QUAL-dominant, case study analysis). These two frameworks, used simultaneously, allows the researcher to examine racial impact on an interpersonal level while considering the impact of context and systems of white supremacy on boards. The qualitative case study, as an approach to research, will facilitate depth of understandings and phenomena within context using a variety of data sources. This section describes the data collection and analysis process as being performed in two phases with the first

phases using quantitative data from charter board members from across the city to understand the contextual environment of the site school. The second phase is an in-depth, qualitative analysis of board members at the site school.

To paint a contextual backdrop for the site school *Chapter Four: The Story of Prestige Academy* utilizes autoethnographic reflections along with news articles, school marketing documents, city historical records, school & state performance data, census data, and more to tell a provocative narrative of St. Louis City's racist history, the region's struggling educational landscape, and the rise and fall of Prestige Academy. The narrative ultimately substantiates Prestige as an ideal case study location due to the motivations of the original founders, the racial complexity of the host city, and the expressed frustrations of black board members.

In *Chapter Five: Phase I Findings, St. Louis Board Members*, a quantitative analysis provides us with an understanding of critical differences in the way black and white board members across the city view their roles as board members and manifest tangible connections with the community. Black board members having deeper connections with St. Louis City and express greater desires to use their role for uplift and advocacy. Additionally, this phase of findings also identifies trends in the way black board members are treated, with a significant number of respondents reporting negative and adverse treatment through their board relationships and interactions.

In *Chapter Six: Phase II Findings, Prestige Board Members,* qualitative data from former board directors of Prestige Academy highlights four (4) pervasive themes relating to the nature of board member experiences, relationships, and conflicts within and across race and stakeholder

137

groups: Community Motivations; Contextual Hyperawareness; Affirmative Representation; and Challenges to Ability and Legitimacy.

Discussion of Group and Context Interconnectedness

There were many findings produced by the two phases of analysis in this study. While each set of stand-alone findings provides deep understanding of the issues surrounding race and charter leadership, the use of the embedded intergroup framework allows us to view these findings as interconnected. To this aim, we can identify salient connections that link themes that emerged at the site level to trends expressed throughout the city's charter landscape. By filtering these findings through a critical race lens, we understand that the frictions that occur between groups are not just the result of organizational dynamics, but the consequence of actors being embedded in a system and a context that supports and leverages white supremeacy.

Three salient connections arise when we compare group and context data across our two phases of analysis: *Community Centrality; Powerholder Aggression & Subversion;* and *Outsider Distrust.*

Community Centrality

Across all forms of data, the role that the local community played in decision-making, interactions, and motivations was front-and-center. The placement of the site school, and its peer schools, within an urban, majority-black, low-income, disenfranchised section of St. Louis was prominent in the way participants understood their role and perceived the impact of race in their experiences. While black and white board members sometimes had differing experiences with the community, the community was nevertheless central in most matters concerning board governance, leadership, and group relationships. Within our quantitative phase we see how black

138

and white board members are relatively aligned in their perceptions of community issues and racial outcomes. Both groups understand their community and their educational context to be racially divided and unfavorable to African Americans. We likewise see a similar pattern emerge in our qualitative data where both black and white board members of the Prestige saw a visible need for better schooling options for the city's children and verbalized a commitment to supporting community representation in school leadership. Conversely, both phases of data highlight the fact that while both racial groups can identify educational needs in the city, black board members are the only ones that foster deep connections to the communities they serve.

Black board members are commonly past and present residents of the city and often have deep family and organizational ties there as well. Indicative of the multiple connections to the community exhibited in the quantitative phase, African Americans in the qualitative phase revealed passionate, emotional responses to issues of discrimination and unfair treatment of black community members. It was this keen understanding of their communities, and its marginalized status, that motivated them to perform board service. Perhaps this is why black board members selected "*supporting community uplift*" as the second most important responsibility of the board, when white directors did not select that item as a top priority at all. Black leaders on charter boards are passionately driven by supporting change in the communities they know and love; conflicts arise, however, when white board members: are unable to understand and/or empathize with their plight; devalue the importance of their community and professional expertise; and/or notably differ in their views of the role of the board and the purpose of the school.

Powerholder Aggression and Subversion

A key finding in this research, which permeates across the contextual and site-specific data sources, is the aggressive and harmful interactions of accountability stakeholders with boards. The

contextual quantitative data revealed that numerous black board members reported experiencing painful and discriminatory treatment from their sponsors on a regular basis. Furthermore, these negative responses from powerholders seemed to be racially motivated as there were no white board members who expressed such concerns. When we layer this on top of our qualitative data we see that the sponsor's relationship with schools – specifically those with black leadership – left directors feeling belittled, dismissed, devalued, offended, and subverted. Black board members had direct adversarial relationships with the entities setup to provided requisite accountability support. As a result, powerholder guidance was not seen as value-add but a value-drain that mainly worked to destabilize black hegemony and affirmation.

Outsider Distrust

The data in both phases alludes to a salient distrust of the motives of outsiders in black school programming. Accountability stakeholders and white board members alike are approached with caution. The quantitative data indirectly alludes to this by showing significant differences in the way black and white board members view the role of race in classroom leadership. Black directors were heavily in favor of black teachers for black students, softly implying that white classroom leadership may have detrimental effects on black children. The qualitative phase highlights the fact that outsider influence was a constant contributor to shifting agendas that caused the school to lose key elements deemed essential in affirming black voices. Furthermore, black board members in both categories voiced their frustration with being treated with less respect, being subject to challenges to their abilities, and have stakeholders be more critical of their work.

The constant barrage of microaggressions, community insensitivity, and challenges to their abilities left black directors frustrated and exhausted. It left them keenly aware of the white supremic context in which they operated and the superior white attitudes that constantly challenged

their legitimacy and quality as leaders. This created sentiments of distrust towards white peers and stakeholders. This distrust was unproductive for boards for three reasons: 1) it constrained the expert advice and referent power of black board members and ultimately caused black board members to withdraw; 2) it caused white board members to feel uncomfortable in their leadership roles in black communities and caused them to steer away from developing meaningful community contacts; and 3) it precipitated a shut down in effective board communication.

Implications

Because many practioners in the charter landscape agree that strong board governance is essential to school success, the patterns and themes highlighted in this study are a cause for alarm. The findings in this study suggest that boards operating in similar contexts will be regularly stifled by interpersonal dysfunction that stems from being embedded in racialized social, geographical, and historical environments. The frustrations experienced by black and white board members attempting to navigate these spaces will ultimately cause members to burn out and lose hope in the ability to create meaningful change. As a result, board turnover will rise creating unstable leadership for developing schools.

Without stable boards, charter schools will ultimately begin to display growing academic deficits on a wide-scale. This outcome will work to weaken the national charter school landscape, subject charter schools to even greater scrutiny, and reduce the promotion of school-choice legislation as a profitable reform tool. This will directly impact black communities as they will need to find alternative spaces to create educational programs that affirm their children. However, it will also impact the hundreds of thousands of white students educated in charter schools across the country by weakening justification for the entire charter agenda.

This research also has strong implications for the City of St. Louis and other similarly situated urban centers. It shows that a city's racial history and contemporary challenges impact day-to-day interactions, decisions, and operations in urban schools. School leaders do not operate in a vacuum and, thus, decisions are directly and indirectly motivated by contextual factors. Cities such as St. Louis, who have become highly segregated and inequitable, must be wholly committed to, and deliberate in, understanding and remediating white supremacy and its consequences in charter school governance. If it does not, the very reform tool that is meant to support achievement for many underserved populations will only work to replicate the systems that create black and brown underperformance.

Furthermore, this research also raises questions as to how we define race in educational agendas. Often charter policies and practices try not to focus on race and use other indicators, such as zip code or income, to define target student populations. Omi and Winant (1993, 1994) racial formation theory alludes to the fact that institutions often participate in racial projects to define and re-define racial identities for the benefit of white supremacy. This study shows that race matters in board governance; thus, by allowing white systems to move discussion in school leadership away from race, schools inadvertently support further reductions in black leadership by weakening affirmative representation. Thus, this study implies that the charter landscape – much like the traditional schooling models – will covertly and consistently maneuver itself to resist black hegemony and control if there is not a deliberate and intentional push to empower marginalized voices.

Recommendations

In order to better support board relationships and effectiveness in the future, this study recommends the following practice and research pursuits:

Recommendations for Practice

1) Have state departments of education (DOEs) perform regular evaluations to gauge the status of relationships and presence interpersonal barriers between accountability stakeholders and charter school boards;

2) DOEs should liaison with universities and highly-skilled diversity & inclusion professionals to provide effective sensitivity and interpersonal trainings to accountability stakeholders and boards that show signs of biased interactions;

3) Governing boards should create spaces during board meetings, or thru separate retreats, to allow for open and regular discussion around school purpose, vision, race, community disparity, and contextual influences to promote increased understanding of board member point of views and funds of knowledge.

Recommendations for Future Research:

1) Qualitatively investigate the views, perceptions, and understandings held by sponsors and powerholders to identify major areas of bias;

2) Explore the role of families, teachers, and administrators in promoting or truncating black voice in charter schools to better account for all the ways in which black students are being affirmed (or devalued) in charter spaces.

Black schools will not be able to effectively support black children without effective and adequate black leadership represented on the board and in top levels of administration. There is a necessity for the expertise and the emotive connectedness of black professionals in the development of black children. Charters can present an opportunity for communities and legislators to create new, innovative spaces to reverse black achievement. However, black

performance will not increase until black disenfranchisement is reversed. If charter boards and accountability stakeholder interactions are working to suppress black leadership, black schools will never find lasting ways to affirm black student identities. Through this study we continue to observe the ageless war cry of the community: "if our children must be educated in two separate Americas, then let us be in charge of the America that is ours!"

TABLES

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of Race and Gender of Survey Respondents (N=21)

	Male	Female	Total
Black/ African-American	4	5	9
White/ Caucasian	6	6	12
Total	**10**	**11**	**21**

Table 2. Age of Survey Respondents by Race (N=21)

	20-29yrs	30-39yrs	40-49yrs	50-59yrs	60-69yrs
Black	0	6	3	0	0
White	3	4	2	2	1

Table 3. Average Years Served on a Board (N=21)

	Mean	SD
Black	3.67	1.58
White	3.75	2.18
Total	**3.71**	**1.90**

Table 4. *Education Level Percent Distribution by Race (N=21)*

	Bachelors	Masters/ Prof.	Doctorate
Black	0 %	100 %	0 %
White	33 %	42 %	25 %
Total	**19%**	**67%**	**14%**

Table 5. *Perceptions of Board Diversity (N=21)*

	No	Yes, A Little	Yes, A Lot
Would you Consider your Board Diverse?			
Black	0 %	78 %	22 %
White	18 %	55 %	27 %

Table 6. *Summary of Chi-Square Analysis of Connections to City by Race (N=21)*

	Black	White
Lives in the City	67%	42%
Grew Up in the City	56%	17% *
Work in the City	33%	33%
Attend Church in the City	44%	0% **

Children Attend School in the City	44%	8% *		
Family lives in the City	44%	0% **		

*$p < .10.$ **$p < .05.$ *(Significant Difference)*

Table 7. *Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Personal Beliefs' by Race and Gender (N=20)*

	Mean	SD	Race *r*	Gender *r*
	1=Strongly Disagree		Black vs	Male vs
	5= Strongly Agree		White	Female
I believe…				
Every person has an equal opportunity for economic success.	1.95	1.024	-.234	-.427
In my city, black and white students are treated differently in school.	4.10	.831	-.373	.112
Race has little impact on one's ability to succeed in my community.	2.14	1.236	-.057	-.203
My city has long standing issues with race.	4.67	.730	-.405	.089

Schools in my community are racially divided.	4.33	.966	-.204	-.169
Low income people do not work as hard as high income people.	1.90	.944	.224	-.099
The pursuit of social justice is a critical need in my community.	4.29	.902	-.375	.201
I believe black students benefit more when they have black teachers.	3.24	1.179	-.490*	-.051
Some of the best teachers of black students I know are white.	3.57	.926	.441*	.286
Academic achievement should be the sole purpose of every school.	2.24	.889	.459*	-.288
I believe a great school can change a struggling community.	4.57	.507	.611**	.330

*p < .05. **p < .01. *(Significant Difference)*

Table 8. *Cross-Tabulation of School Purpose Belief by Race (N=21)*

I believe that "Academic achievement should be the sole purpose of every school"					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Black	22 %	78 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
White	8 %	50 %	17 %	25 %	0 %

Table 9. *Ranking of Self-Reported Top Responsibilities of the Board by Number of Respondent votes (N=21)*

	Black	White
Determine the mission and purpose of school	*1st Most Selected*	*1st Most Selected*
Select, Support, and Evaluate School Leader	*3rd*	*5th*
Ensure effective organizational planning	*3rd*	*3rd*
Ensure adequate resources	*5th*	*No Selections*
Approve/ monitor annual budget	*7th*	*3rd*
Monitor progress in achieving academic outcomes	*7th*	*6th*
Be ambassadors, advocates, and community reps	*5th*	*No Selections*
Support community uplift and education	*2nd*	*No Selections*

Adhere to local, state, and federal regulations	*No Selections*	*2nd*
Recruit and orient new members and assess board	*7th*	*No Selections*

Table 10. *Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Perceptions of Treatment' by*

Race and Gender (N=20)

	Mean	**SD**	**Race *r***	**Gender *r***
	1=Never		Black vs	Male vs
				Female
	5= Always		White	
As a board member…				
You are/were treated with less courtesy than other people.	1.65	1.089	-.393	-.047
You are/were treated with less respect than other people.	1.85	1.137	-.576**	-.226
You felt people were more critical of your performance.	2.00	1.451	-.640**	-.141
People treated you as if you are not as smart/capable as others.	2.05	1.432	-.400	-.251

People acted as if they were afraid of you.	1.40	.940	-.263	-.436
People acted as if you were a dishonest person.	1.50	.946	-.382	.108
You felt your opinion was not valued.	2.05	1.504	-.449*	-.171

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. (Significant Difference)*

Table 11. *Cross-Tabulation of Respectful Treatment by Race (N=20)*

In your experience as a board member, you felt you were treated with less respect than others…

	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	44 %	22 %	0 %
White	82 %	9 %	9 %	0 %	0 %

Table 12. Cross-Tabulation of Critical Performance Treatment by Race (N=20)

In your experience as a board member, you felt people were more critical of your performance.

	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	22 %	22 %	22 %
White	82 %	18 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Table 13. Cross-Tabulation of Value Treatment by Race (N=20)

In your experience as a board member, you felt your opinion was not valued.

	Never	Once a Year	Few Times a Year	Few Times a Month	Almost All the Time
Black	33 %	0 %	44 %	0 %	22 %
White	82 %	9 %	0 %	0 %	9 %

Table 14. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of 'Experiences with Discrimination'

by Race and Gender (N=20)

	Mean	SD	Race *r*	Gender *r*
	1=None		Black vs	Male vs
	3= A Lot		White	Female
You have experienced adverse treatment or discrimination from…				
Fellow Board Members due to your Race	1.40	.754	-.328	.000
Fellow Board Members due to your Gender	1.15	.366	-.183	.140
Accountability Stakeholders due to your Race	1.40	.681	-.667**	.000
Accountability Stakeholders due to Gender	1.30	.657	-.518*	.156

*p < .05. **p < .01. (Significant Difference)

Table 15. Cross-Tabulation of Racial Discrimination by Race-Gender Sub-Groups (N=20**)**

I have experience adverse treatment or discrimination from Accountability Stakeholders due to my RACE…			
	No, Never	Yes, A little	Yes, A Lot
Black Male	0 %	100 %	0 %
Black Female	60 %	0 %	40 %
White Male	100 %	0 %	0 %
White Female	100 %	0 %	0 %

Table 16. Cross-Tabulation of Gender Discrimination by Race-Gender Sub-Groups (N=20**)**

I have experience adverse treatment or discrimination from Accountability Stakeholders due to my Gender…			
	No, Never	Yes, A little	Yes, A Lot
Black Male	50 %	50 %	0 %
Black Female	60 %	0 %	40 %
White Male	100 %	0 %	0 %
White Female	100 %	0 %	0 %

APPENDICES

Focus Group Location: Private Area in a St. Louis Diner
Cadre: African American Former Board Members of Prestige Academy
Date: May 7th, 2017
Number of Attendees: Two (2)
Name of Transcriber: D. McAdoo
Number of Tapes: One (1)
Confirmation of receipt and understanding of the Letter of Consent was received from all Interview participants. Alias names are used in place for real names for the school and interview participants.

Interviewer (00:05): The first question I have for you guys is why is educating black youth important to you?

Arthur (00:21): Educating black youth is important to me cause, given our history it was something that was taken away. Now the problem is what's wrong. In our history we were not allowed to read and write or even learn and it's got a lot to do with what's going on. So now we gotta work twice as hard to try to establish a foundation as to why it's even important, dealing with the struggles of our African American family. So it's very imperative that we try to instill that with all the hindrances that are involved in the African American community.

Julian (01:12): I think that its important. I thank that there's a type of education that happens in our country that reinforces social strata. And so for me I think educating black youth is important from a stand point of interrupting the common narrative that we see in our country. But the education has to be of a different type and intentional to help uncover and help our black youth to understand the context in which the navigate everyday.

Interviewer (02:00): Why did you join the board of the school [Prestige Academy]?

Arthur (02:05): I joined the board because I thought it was necessary for a particular need for this type f school in the African American community. Nothing like this had been established in the Midwest, as far as I know. It's real high on the east coast, but nothing new like this here had ever been done. I just felt passion for it. So to be a part of something like this, and establishing it, I felt as though it would be good for the people that came beyond us. I wanted to [inaudible].

Julian (03:03): I joined the board because I believe in the mission of this school. The ideology was very much in line with what I just spoke to as far as interrupting narratives. What the school founder set out to accomplish was very audacious, very inspiring. And I believed that if accomplished that it would be a game changer within the city and the region in which we reside because the city is very polarized and the narrative is very negative as it relates to black people as it relates to education and I thought this would. And I wanted to be a part of something that I feel, as far as being a game changer in education, this vision could accomplish that.

Interviewer (04:03): Take a second. I want you to think about what was the most rewarding and

what was the most frustrating part about being on the board?

Arthur (04:17): One of the most rewarding parts of being on the board was seeing the board and school get established. It was good to know we were effective in being able to make a number of decisions that were going to affect a lot of people. Just knowing we were able to say what we were going to do and how we were going to do it, was sometimes daunting, but also very exciting. To actually create something and having to research different schools and bringing [information] back to the table and working with other people collectively so we can put this school together. One hard thing, being a public entity, having someone to answer too, someone, for example a sponsor and certain individuals who helped fund the school. We had to answer the people who did not understand the vision. In essence, they caused us to go backwards from where we started.

Julian (05:44): The most rewarding art of being on the board is just the relationships I was able to form, and in one case, reconnect. So umm, so yea, the relationships were very rewarding and it was a good thing. For frustrating, umm, I'd just say that the dynamics between some of the members of the board. I think there was a lack of trust, a little bit of, umm… I don't know. It did now, we just didn't seem to function, during the ladder end of my tenure, very effectively in terms of communication, in terms of vision, in terms of trust of each others expertise. So that was very frustrating, it almost seemed, umm, it just seemed dysfunctional for me. So that was very frustrating.

Interviewer (07:09): So I want to drill down into something both of you mentioned. So for you Arthur, you mentioned there might have been frustration and issues in your interactions with the people you were being held accountable by. Can you talk a bit about what those frustrations look like, if there were any type of compromises you had to make, or anything else?

Arthur (07:47): [Prestige Academy] stood for excellence; or it stands for excellence. So, for starters, taking the Latin part away from the school was a big concern for me. So it was very disheartening. We were going forward, we were progressing. We had results to show it. However, it seemed like each year we went on it was something- a pillar or a part of the foundation – it felt like it was being taken away. For what reasons, I don't know, I just saw it happen. It's something to be said when you have students going from an elementary reading level up to a college reading level in a year, maybe two years. But that was my big frustration, just, being asked to steer away, instead of adding on to what Prestige originally stood for.

Interviewer (09:15): Julian, you mentioned that there was a lack of trust between board members, specifically a lack of trust in expertise. Can you give a little reference as to how that lack of trust manifested itself.

Julian (09:22): I think that the dynamic that I observed from perspective, the interplay between some of the board members of color, and the board members who were white – there was a disposition that I believe is prevalent in our area and our city. That is typically when you have setting like that – business professional and educational - there's a mindset that when you have an urban failing school district, and you know, then you have white folks come in and they are instantly the experts to the point that they either knowingly or unknowingly adopt a mentality

157

that's like a savior complex or a God complex. And this creates a situation where then, well, they just don't listen. They don't, essentially respect the expertise that other people of color bring to the table. This manifests itself in the way that, from the top to the bottom, the way teachers interact with parents, board members interact with teachers, and within the board members themselves. I sensed a little bit of that dynamic at play, where folks were not really willing to listen and honor the expertise that everyone brought to the table as it related to board dynamics, holding our organization accountable, painting a clear vision, strategic planning, things of that nature. When we had conversations like that it was very difficult to move forward because there was always this second guessing that took place that then caused the group to be dysfunctional. So then we could not provide adequate leadership for the organization. So that was mainly what I was thinking about.

Interviewer (11:42): As you think about your interactions with board members, how would you describe interaction in general. And then, how would you describe interaction with members of the same race and with members of a different race while on the board.

Arthur (12:00): In the beginning I thought the relationships with our board members was very, very good. Between blacks and whites, males and females, it was very good. We had the vision in sight as far as where we were going with our goals. However, when we were kind of forced [by the Mayor's office] to add on new members, it got kind of icky. We were dealing with people that didn't have our vision. They were good people, it just it can be kind of hard dealing with new people. And so what we have now is the result of everybody not being on the same page, with the new relationships not being as tight as the founding relationships were. You know, and everybody had there own vision and own ideas. It just caused a lot of confusion.

Julian (13:20): I wasn't part of the founding board. I came on later. By the time I arrived I think there may have been one or two folks who were apart of the original board, I'm not sure but, you know, we were always cordial. But, you know, as I said, as I look at the personalities and the dynamics and communication, I just think there were a couple of folks who were just going through the motions. The were jaded as it relates to education. They ultimately withdrew from the board. I don't know if they were burnt out or whatever the case may be. There was another person who – and I have to say, all of this is happening within the context of a mid-western city that was historically very polarized. There is a lot of a racism that impacts the way black people navigate the space as well as white people – But there was one board member who I believed had some internalized oppression going on and it affected how they interacted with even the other black people on the board. Then concurrent with when I came on there was another gentlemen who came on who was of European decent that, like I said, always cordial but there seemed to be, I don't know how accurate I am, but there seemed to be some manipulation. Some inherent white privilege type behavior that seemed to be going on between the interplay of the board members. But in terms of this, we were always professional, cordial and everything. But dysfunctional nonetheless.

Interviewer (15:33): Can you think of a particular situation in which race became particularly salient for you in how board members interacted with each other? Either a prominent situation that happened at a board meeting or in the larger context of the school, but can you think of a particular situation in which race became really visible in interactions?

Julian (16:15): You know, I can't say for sure but, for me, I'm reminded of a story a friend of mine told me. He lives in Texas and at the time I think he worked in an electronics store. He would always share with me – he's a funny guy – but he always tells me about racist interactions he has down in Texas. [He said] There was a white lade who called and was having an issue with her phone. He told her the solution and that was not sufficient. And he shared this inside joke with a coworker who was white, and he said, let me give you this phone so she can hear it from a white person. So his coworker basically told her the exact same thing and she was fine. I use that story to share an incident we had on the board, well not really an incident but just something I noticed. I don't know if I'm totally on base here and it goes back to strategic planning. At the time I was serving as president of the board and as a person with experience in education I knew one of the things that was important is that we had, you know, not a vision, we already had a vision, but some framework with which we could actualize the vision. In public education we call that CSIP – comprehensive school improvement plan for the entire district, 3 to 5 years out. This is what I was trying to implement. As I was having conversations with some of the members of the board, it seemed to fall on deaf ears. So what I proceeded to do was get another organization to come in and explain that, these people were white, and when they came in an essentially explained everything that I was saying, then all of a sudden it was well received. So for me that seemed like a situation where race was very salient and these are people who on the surface would profess to be progressive liberals. But in actuality or as it plays out on a day to day they still function out of certain biases and kind of a racist lens, if you ask me.

Arthur (18:45): I wasn't on the board at that time and so I didn't really have to deal with anything of that nature. So that's it for me.

Interviewer (19:07): Now I'm going to ask you to think about your interactions with the sponsor, whoever was your sponsor at the time. How would you generally describe your interactions with your sponsor?

Julian (19:19): Again, I would say, same dynamic at play. When I came on it [the sponsor representative] was one person but it quickly changed to another person. This [new] person was a white male, and I guess if I could describe him, I guess if I could pear it down I would just say very condescending. Very much again – savior mentality, expert, didn't matter that I had a background in education and was working in the field for x number of years. This person was very, umm, dismissive and condescending in my opinion.

Arthur (20:08): How could I restate that question.

Interviewer (20:17): You can restate it.

Arthur (20:25): I mean if you can because I kind of

Interviewer (20:30): You can just talk about accountability in general. And to be clear, you wer serving under a different sponsor.

Arthur (20:38): Right**.** So I mean. We had a good relationship with the old sponsor. But when we got the new sponsor - I was working in the school then, not on the board - that's when things

started getting away, taken away, it seems [*inaudible*]. It was very frustrating.

Interviewer (21:47): Along with feeling the demands being made from accountability stakeholders – so that is the sponsor, but it could also be others like funders, or charter association or the mayor's office or any other major accountability stakeholder in this region – from your perspective, do you feel as though the school site you were at was treated differently than other school sites? If so, why?

Arthur (22:20): I do feel as though we were treated a little bit different. I mean, this is still America, this is still [St. Louis] and it is divided. And whenever you have educated African American males leading the charge in mostly anything, but [specifically] when it comes to education, we always have to deal with something extra. If were progressing, it's still not good enough. It's somewhat disheartening. We were doing great. In the first year in existence we had the best school in the city of St. Louis, as far as teaching and academic achievements. Our students were smarter, they were well versed. Our African American students were doing better than those students who were fortunate enough to go to districts that are economically and have, you know, you know. I just felt we were still treated like a black school. I really felt it.

Julian (23:50): My perspective is different. I came on to the school with having experience in a suburban public-school context. So dealing with sponsors and mayor's office, all that was new for me. This was my first charter experience. But as I got to get to know folks and put two and two together, it does seem – at the risk of sounding like a conspiracy theorist – it does seem like as if there were groups and bodies by these folks who were highly interested in what was going on at [Prestige Academy]. They needed to get into the inner workings of it to try and figure things out and, I don't know if dismantle is the right word, but because of the first-year success – drastic, shockingly awesome success – it got a lot of attention. And I think there are some folks who logically should have been celebrating that, but in real life as it relates to some of the dynamics and some of the things I have shared before in terms of certain folks having to have control and be the savior, that narrative of educated black men, coming into the inner city and doing what folks haven't been able to do in twenty years, was, I believe, threatening. At the risk of sounding like a conspiracy theorist, yea, but I believe there was even one member of the board who was in very close contact with the mayor's office and folks from the mayor's office. After I reflected on it and I was removed from it for some time I just had to wonder if, some folks were strategically planted as moles or something, I don't know, I can't say. But I do know it didn't take long before, like Arthur said, things started to be taken away. Things started getting removed from the inner workings a frameworks in which leadership crafted in order to get kids caught up quickly, all of that seemed to be strategically taken away; kind of stripped away. And as a result, the performance went down. So those are my thoughts.

Interviewer (26:47): Something both of you guys mentioned is this being [THIS city]. You talked about the history and the divide in [THIS city]. How much of a role do you feel that [THIS city] played overall in Prestige Academy, how it evolved, and how it was perceived and treated from the community and the accountability stakeholders? In good ways or bad ways.

Julian (27:20): I think the community of charter school leaders, I think there was a respect there and some comradery- especially on the part of school leadership. I think the school [Prestige

Academy] very quickly gained a reputation for itself because of it positive results that very first year. And so the school was really on pace, like I said before, to be a game changer and kind of change the power play in respect to the educational landscape in The City. I think it's because of that that there were some other folks who were not celebrating that success and kind of wanted to come in and change some things up. But I think there were both folks who celebrated and wanted to come and learn and collaborate; but because The City has some deep-rooted issues as it relates to the social strata it was kind of quickly squelched from what I can tell.

Arthur (28:50): Thinking on The City, looking back on the Mayor's staff, charter board committee staff, there was only one African American person on that staff. Looking back, I'm kind of like, wow. Like, how much success do these people or individuals really want? So, I was like what are we really a part of. Are we hear just to hit their bench marks are we in The City to make a difference? [*Inaudible*].

Interviewer (30:00): So I'm going to switch gears a bit. So you were in The City during the protests, the Michael Brown incident [and others] and the protests that followed. What was it look to live through these events and their aftermath as an educator and school leader? What was it like being in the educational space during this time?

Arthur (30:50): I worked in a school [not Prestige] where we always had incidents like Corey Jones. It wasn't a daily occurrence but it was a recurring act. We saw theft, murders, deaths, run-ins with the law, it was something I saw often. They just weren't put into mainstream America. They were not put on T.V. I remember talking to kids after they just lost someone. I never forget those moments. [These Protests] was just on T.V. So when it happened I was not surprised. I was not even taken aback, because I was use to it. It was said that it happened and even now there is new evidence coming out that should have been publicized earlier. It's sad to say but I wasn't surprised, I was just looking to see how this would play out.

Julian (32:33): I think for me during that time - so my job was in a suburban public school context, majority white district. Sorry to say, and I'm not really surprised, but the response was very apathetic. Folks were not willing to have conversations, folks were not willing to acknowledge that an incident like this can cause trauma and stress to our kids of color. No one was really willing to support our kids in that way. Because of the tenseness of the situation, some of the white folks were saying, "let's just kind of wait for all the information to come out", but that really had nothing to do with how our students were feeling. So that was very frustrating to see. Very frustrating. But again, this is St. Louis, I was in a suburb of THE CITY were race isn't talk about intentionally, at all, so.

Interviewer (33:55): So with that, know as you look at your experience with Prestige Academy, do you think that members of the black community and members of the white community dealt with that situation differently and if so , how?

Arthur (34:15): I think we did an ok job dealing with the situation. I think we tried to say, hey lets bring people together, let's see how people are feeling. But at the end of the day, people who are different are going to treat people different. But the whole situation could have been avoided. It could have been avoided by having proper relationships. Proper relationships with each other,

the community, law enforcement.

Julian (35:50): There were folks on both sides who were invested and interested in having civil discourse, dialogue, and reconciliation. Then there were folks on both sides who were extremists, pointing the finger, angry and not willing to listen to folks on the other side. So I would say yes, both sides, black and white, the folks in the middle, the folks in the extremes, all had a part to play in it. I would just say, historically, not just in St. Louis, but in this nation, whenever you have a group of people who are oppressed, it is necessary for those people, who either directly or indirectly, descendent of the folks who were the offenders of that oppression, its necessary for them to take a stance of humility in order to listen and learn. While there were some folks in this city who did that, by and large, the governmental bodies and power did not do that. This is why we saw what's on the television scream across America because there are a lot of people in that community that were not just filling oppressed, they were feeling dismissed. And some felt they had no recourse but to turn to violence and destruction to get folks attention.

Interviewer (37:44): How do you think traditional schools impact black children? So this school was a charter school designed to function outside the traditional public school, district framework. Was it your desire to work in the charter model because you wanted some type of alternative to function outside a traditional district school? And if so, why do you think an alternative was necessary?

Arthur (37:56): [*Inaudible*]. Right now, the choices just don't support African American students ability to learn. We need options that show our children they have value. The school was setup to make sure African Americans understood they could be Prestige lent. And they were, the first year they did amazing. That's not what you so in the public schools in this city. [*Inaudible*].

Julian (39:46): I think most traditional public schools, government schools if you will, are status quo and microcosms of society. Because of that it reinforces an inferior status for black kids. And it may just be because that's how it's setup. It may not even be intentional, but because of the systems and just how public education was formed—you know, we basically have the same system we had 60 years ago. It's designed to codify and solidify the social strata. So most traditional public schools create a situation where black kids feel inferior, less than, not as smart as. But I do know of public schools where they are making it work. They are being intentional. They are doing diversity training and things like that. I think competition is good, so charter schools are necessary as well as public, as well as private and parochial. That's good for everyone. But there are some things that charter schools are supposed to be able to do in terms of having more creativity, but it didn't quite play out that way in this case in terms of this school. When we were trying to be creative those things were cited as infraction on how things were supposed to go so. In the final analysis we were not allowed to be very creative at all and to conform to the status quo, and once that was done we go the [status quo] results as far as performance. But I think, public district, public charter, magnet, private, doesn't matter what it is, if your intentional in understanding the context of this country and how it impacts oppressed people, and your intentional in reversing that, then it can work. The goal is to be psychologically affirming to black kids, disrupt narratives, show them vision and potential- that can be done in any context. But as it relates to the politics, the structures, the red tape, I think the best model to

do that unapologetically, because the founders were unapologetically setting out to be psychologically affirming to this group, and I just think a lot of folks were uncomfortable with that in St. Louis. So I think the best model would be a private school, to be able to pull it off and do it well, without interruption.

Interviewer (43:25): Knowing what you know now, what is some advice you would give to other board members to better serve their school and community?

Arthur (43:43): I would let them know, that focus on the community. The community is what matters and that's who your serve. Often times, the outside entities do not have you best interests at heart. They have other interests, but not that of the community. Gotta have the community be the focus, that's the only way I would do something like that again.

Julian (45:40): I guess that advice I would give, as far as adding to the board, would be finding leaders who are indigenous to the community. That they understand, not just from a head stand point, but a heart stand point and an experiential stand point, what it's going to take to accomplish the vision. That doesn't mean to suggest that the board should be all black, but as it relates to finding white folks there needs to be a through vetting that they have a strong social justice lens, and not just a surface social justice lens. They need understanding, cause as we say in the black community, some white folks are just knowledgeable enough to be dangerous. And they know how to talk to the talk but in reality they are operating out of a biased lens. So being intentional about finding white folks who really truly have a heart for social justice and who are humble enough to take a disposition of learning and listening and respect the expertise that people of color bring to the table.

Interview Location: Phone
Participant Description: Etta – Director & Ex-officio Board member, Black Female, 60s
Date: August 13th, 2017
Name of Interviewer: D. McAdoo
Number of Tapes: One (1)
Confirmation of receipt and understanding of the Letter of Consent was received from all Interview Etta's. Alias names are used in place for real names for the school and interview Etta's.

Interviewer (00:30): So why did you decide to join the school site?

Etta (00:36): Because I like education, and I like the fact that we can start up new schools and hope to be effective in the children's and the family's lives in that area.

Interviewer (00:46): How would you describe your overall experience with the Board of Directors at the school? And with that specifically, you can talk about what you found rewarding and what you found difficult.

Etta (01:00): Well I found it rewarding to not only be able to effect the Board, be able to effect the children's and the family's lives at that level. And so that was the most rewarding. But you could bring perspective to the families about what education is and what the school intended to do and being able to effect change and improvements in the school. That was very rewarding.

Interviewer (01:33): Did you have any difficulties that you want to discuss or put out there?

Etta (01:36): I think that the thing I noticed the most was that from the Boards of Charter Schools in general that although they say they want to educate, particularly African American Students, they didn't necessarily want to support African American leadership over those students.

Interviewer (02:01): And so with that, if you wanna kinda describe, how would you describe your relationship with the Board of Directors in general, and then if you want to think about if you have any thoughts on how you believe race may have played a role in the type of relationship your have with the Board.

Etta (02:22): I think overall, my relationship was, was generally good. They did entertain my recommendations and they were supportive of the things that I would bring to the Board. I was able to entertain some of the changes that we wanted to make, some of the ideas that I have. And also, we were able to share the responsibility between the two of us of how the school was going to drive for the next year. As far as race impacting, I think that, like I was saying before, there is a point at which the Boards, and their influencer tend to, "I want to educate an African American child, but I don't necessarily want an African American leader at that level, influencing." Because, I think race is saying that our African American leaders, well let me say this another

way. I think that the Boards still are looking for accolades, and success, as they typically do. "This is an area where I can achieve immediate success. This is an area where I can achieve recognition," but, ya know, "let's squelch the African American leaders, and keep them under a certain amount of control. And then when we get them, if we can't control them, let's get rid of them."

Interviewer (04:04): Do you have a particular event, or example that highlights this sentiment of what your saying as far as African American leadership kinda being controlled or not being allowed to really being free to lead the school, that comes to mind?

Etta (04:24): One thing was that, we would have meetings with the other schools, then you would notice that the African American Schools, and their reputation was always squelched. You know, you'd go to meetings and it was always the schools that had white leadership or non-African American leadership. Those were the leader schools, and those were the potential schools. But those that were led by African Americans were worthy of leadership by other non-African Americans but not by the African Americans. I saw that at Prestige , I saw that at the International schools, um, what was it? [Name Restricted], I think it was. I saw that in all those schools. It was almost an expectation that those schools would not do well. And ya know, sometimes you get what you expect. And because if you're leading like at the sponsor level with the board, then certainly, that's gonna trickle down. And it influences other people in the community as to whether they're gonna participate on your Board.

Interviewer (05:51): Good point, and you brought up the sponsors so I want to shift a little bit to the sponsors. So how would you overall describe your relationship with the sponsors?

Etta and Interviewer share a hearty laugh (06:10)

Interviewer (06:02): That's very fair, politically correct. O.K., and, with that, do you think that um, just looking at your relationship, do you think that different people on the Board or in leadership of either your Charter school or any other Charter school. Do you think that they were treated differently by sponsors? And if so, why?

Etta (06:30): I found that, we've had the flare of the sponsors. They would look for success in their own career, in their own career path, and the African American led schools were not sitting high enough, or represented enough in terms of their production, that they, or that the sponsor wanted to get behind it. You know I've seen that flavor in Corporate America. It's not only in the schools, but you'd see that there. If I wanna get ahead, then I'm gonna pick the group, what's gonna be looked at the most? Certainly African American students because we see that they're needy. You know, so "Here's a way I can help Africans." Ya know, so "Let's feed em, let's clothe em. Let's give em a school and, Cheerio! We're successful! But I'm successful as a non-African American." Now when I'm African American and a leader they've got to move you out of the way. And I saw that too much.

Interviewer (07:54): Thanks for sharing. If you were to think about a time when there was any type of, disagreement among the Board members either like on a course of action, a hiring decision, student discipline or strategic or anything. Can you describe how the Board went about resolving that disagreement?

Etta (08:22): If they made a disagreement about themselves?

Interviewer (08:27): Yeah, that was just something. Whatever example. Well I guess the first one is like um, can you ever recall a time where there seemed to be a pretty strong disagreement on the Board, or within the Board?

Etta (08:38): Not really. Um, most of the time, if it was a student issue, a student/parent issue that needed to be resolved, the Boards tend to look to the Principal, and Executive Director to resolve. And so that's what we did. We would come forth with our recommendations and people would listen to us as time went by.

Interviewer (09:07): That's good. So I had a couple of folks mention in interviews before, that there may have been sentiments of qualifications when it came to African American leaders and Board members. Do you feel that your qualifications were ever questioned as a member of the Board and a member of the leadership and if so, what do you kinda believe the root of that was?

Etta (09:39): [Voice is inaudible from 09:39 - 10:01]

Etta (10:09): And I guess my perspective, I'm like well, is that a true statement you have of a great expectation, however, there are plenty of people that are leading groups in this world and are very successful and they have no expectation at all.

Interviewer (10:21): Do you think that black and white Board members were ever treated differently by the school sponsor or any of the Accountability stake holders such as the State, or the City, or the Mayor's office?

Etta (10:43): Only as they were led by the sponsor. I think that. My interaction with like the former Mayor is that, there was always good judgement and supportive, but again, they're gonna follow the pattern of the sponsor and then they'll come down to the Board. So the sponsor is trying to build up their own self-esteem, or their own career and they are looking at how they are going to establish a school based the way all the other schools that are led by non-blacks then those will follow. That's going to be the pattern. And then, you know, it's like, "I'm gonna go, you know, where it looks like me, feels like me. I feel more comfortable because I have my own reputation to protect." And that is felt and I think it's obvious.

Interviewer (11:44): If you rewind the clock and change one thing about your Charter school experience, what would it be and why?

Etta (11:53): Change one thing, um. Probably I would say, how you plan the long range plans for the strategic planning of the school. That's what I would change. I really would. And I would have a strong conversation with the sponsor. [Inaudible] And would suggest we look back at what that system in place will look like and [Inaudible from 12:33 - 12:47]...And so whether you were doing good or whether you were doing bad, it's whatever somebody's calling better for the school. And, it's not necessarily the School Board. Most of the time in my situation, because they went back to [Inaudible from 13:04 - 13:12]...distraction. Either I distracted you for doing good, [Inaudible from 13:14 to 13:34]...They look at allowances of what it is I do well and not do well per school. The difference is [Inaudible from 13:46 - 13:53]...Ya know but keeping it sponsored poorly. Ok, [Inaudible from 13:58 - 14:34]

Interviewer (14:35): Do you think it's important to have representative Black leadership of a Black Charter school?

Etta (14:45): I think so, I really do because an African American family have so much that they go through on a daily basis and show them, [Inaudible]. They need to see people like them. You can show them they can go forward and be something. And it's not that I cant do something because I'm black.…[Inaudible].. The thing about charter schools and America in general. America has a focus on how to squelch African Americans and our [inaudible] and our responsibilities. [Inaudible] It's going to sneak up behind you and it's going to overtake you.

Interviewer (16:40): If you can think about, take a few seconds and think about where you were during Corey Johnson. Now were you still at the school when the Michael Brown incident happened?

Etta (16:56): No

Interviewer (16:58): OK

Etta (17:00): I don't think so anyway.

Interviewer (17:08): That was a good point anyway. It was a couple of years ago.

Etta (17:11): [Inaudible from 17:11 - 17:19]

Interviewer (17:20): Even with that situation and/or just any other situation of like either local, or national importance, where race had like, a clear piece of the puzzle, whether it was the reelection of Obama, whether it was just [Inaudible word] anything where there was just an underlying racial undertone. Can you think about if there were any discussions that were had or you wished were had, but weren't had around race and how to deal with that in the school?

Etta (18:05): [Inaudible from 18:05 - 19:33]

Interviewer (19:34): Got you. So last question. Just thinking about your time with [not sure what was said here], and with the Board, anything else that you think is of importance to share in order to get, or any advice you would give them in order to just improve the way that the Board works movin' on?

Etta (19:52): I think that the [Inaudible from 19:59 - 21]

Interview Location: Phone
Joey Description: Joey - Board Member, White Male, 20s
Date: August 8th, 2017
Name of Interviewer: D. McAdoo
Number of Tapes: One (1)
Confirmation of receipt and understanding of the Letter of Consent was received from all Interview Joeys. Alias names are used in place for real names for the school and interview Joeys.

Interviewer (00:03): The first question I would like to ask you, why did you join the Board of the School?

Joey (00:07): I was invited by the Founder. The mission was exciting. I had already participated in helping to develop the sustainability plan and so I wanted to continue my efforts. And for a similar reason I was attracted to the project. A school that could help continue students with educational outcomes and I am a believer that thru improving someoneś educational outcomes you can improve their entire life trajectory so thatś what was appealing the project to join.

Interviewer (00:49): Thank you. Can you tell me what you find rewarding and what you find challenging as a Charter Board member?

Joey (00:56): Letś think. Somethings rewarding, having some input to the direction of the school. As a Board member, at this point, different atmosphere that we worked on [in], but generally remember working thru the early issue of starting a school and I remember the Board Chairman and School founder had like a roadmap provided by either the City of St. Louis or the Charter School Association, and so as a Board, we were working through that roadmap and on those issues and just having frequent board meetings, I remember, so, yea I enjoyed that stuff. Things that were challenging about the Board? For one, starting up the school and not quite understanding how the school was going to go from idea in a entrepreneurial class and school to a start-up school that provided high quality instruction that has high quality teachers in the City of St. Louis. I don´t have specific memories at the moment but a sense of ¨What is the difference between playing Board member and that being a Board member having influence and input into the schoolś starting up?¨

Interviewer (02:58): Thank you. Think about your time on the Board. How would you describe the relationships among Board members?

Joey (03:08): For the most part of my tenure during the Board, I think congenial. At least there was core, say, a central group of the people in their early 20´s on the Board that had worked together and planned together and I believe the Board founder and the Board Vice Chair were more relatable to the people in their 20´s and so that was a good crew. And then there was another group during my time that was more from, recruited from the community work and social work and parents and what not. And so on a social front, there was less, less relatability in terms of life phase. [Inaudible]

Interviewer (04:35): Awesome, thank you. Now, when you think about your time on the Board, can you recall any moments or any type of experiences where race became salient in the way that Board members interacted or received each other?

Joey (05:02): There was one recruiting Board member where we were ready to seat for a prominent role where we were interviewing a [potential] Board member and during the interview process, there came a point where we found that the person, a white male, interviewing to join the board didn't quite believe that the students who would attend the school was capable of learning at high levels. And having everyone in honors to that affect the school that the school was shooting for and the Board member was otherwise qualified to provide basic guidance and then during a discussion with the Board it was our view that we shouldn't have someone on the board that didn't believe in the children and their potential to Prestige as a board member for the school. So that was one way I remember in recruiting how race played a role [Inaudible 06:39 - 06:43]. Also, in on looking for a new school and location and race mattered in where we would be located. And another example was with the Mayor´s office … the Mayor´s office and the one that said that they we weren't taking into account the trouble with educating students in high honors, particularly low-income, African American students that we were targeting, and not having food or clothes, or the multifaceted community level.

Interviewer (07:59): Thank you. So really quickly a follow-up question. With the guy that was a qualified Board member but didn´t really believe that the students that school was targeting would be able to meet the schoolś expectations. What made you think that race was a factor either in his perception, and the way the Board, well both in his perception and in the way the Board discussed whether or not he should join?

Joey (08:40): [Inaudible 08:41 - 08:48] I don´t remember the details but, I want to say that it was clear to the majority of the Board members that the school was going to be 90% African American and the thing with the [Unclear word} school system, I believe the majority African American than likely much greater than 50% but, [Unclear word] the numbers and so thereś a, kind of a clear, if not a clear understanding than a good probability that he knew what kind of demographic we were serving and then during the interview, whatever comment was made, it became, the consensus amoung the group that what he said, his words, were skeptical of the students´ ability to learn and then possibly the model itself which was predicated on a high honors detracking curriculum and thinking if that was the best route for students that have [Inaudible 10:00 - 10:04] so, thatś the best I can do as far as talking about the Board members. As far as the Board, it was difficult in making a decision on whether to make this person an offer. We were split. Some of us arguing for bringing him on board because he was the best qualified and [Unclear word] contributed [Unclear word] individual [Unclear word] and would provide us a helpful voice. Another contingent was took that his skepticism about the students´ ability was a major red flag. And ended up winning the day as far as not wanting someone on the Board that would potentially thru their beliefs, undermine the work of the group. But that [Unclear word] whether to offer this Board member a role was a contentious decision. I can´t remember if the group, say the 2 sides of the argument were, whether the split was racially motivated within the Board or it was more of a, if not intellectual discussion then [Inaudible 11:37 - 11:39]. I don´t know if, and I don´t think at that time, the Board members themselves

169

were skeptical of students´ ability as much as they were that belief was a deal breaker.

Interviewer (12:03): Thank you. I recall you mentioning one of the things (hold on one second). So I actually want to go back to a previous discussion we had. Can you talk about a little bit about how you may have viewed some of the qualifications of Board members and maybe if there were any things, any way that race was [Unclear of word used] or important or how race may have influenced your perception of qualifications of Board members?

Joey (12:53): Yes. When we were considering and when we hired other Board members, there was a combination of race kind of socio-economic background and then school experience that played a role, that definitely influenced my perception of Board members. And I remember certain Board members and some of them were African American didn´t have the same backgrounds as or they didn´t have prestigious school backgrounds or they didn´t have extensive accolades. And then, even they didn´t argue as effectively or have some of the same type of education as some of the other Board members and so that, as far as Board members confidence influenced my perception of their confidence and it affected the way that I wondered what their qualifications were and what, like, how they were chosen. And I think that race was part of that, and race was part of that mix in terms of the evaluation and certain things that come along with race in terms of education, opportunity. The way a person talk in an argument, stuff like that.

Interviewer (15:19): Thanks for sharing. Sounds like a really like mix of frustration in terms of like understanding [Inaudible 15:37 - 15:43] So, how do you or how would you explain like how you go about that [Inaudible 15:53 - 16:05]. How would you describe how you came to this understanding and how you feel about this understanding?

Joey (16:15): It´s [Unclear] understanding and then [Unclear of words used 16:24 - 16:25] in aware of [Inaudible]. At the time it would be something that I recognized [Inaudible]. Not a bad feeling of [Unclear] but I felt like not great that I was having these feelings and [Unclear] that were influencing my perception and my judgement. At the time, the best I could do was try [Inaudible 17:04 - 17:08] is try to keep anyone from discovering that I had perceptions and try to kind of hold them back or just keep them privately. I think, just having additional life experiences over time both after the school experience, the Board member experience in other parts of life and then being able to integrate the Board member experience with part of self reflection on life and having an expanding view, an expanded view how one kind of perceives another person I think itś a process that takes time and experience and exposure to a broader range of experiences. I think that what has been positive to a certain extent personally is being able to talk thru some of the judgements [Inaudible} in a way that allows me to make forward progress but itś difficult to [Inaudible] kind of like in changing perceptions or anything like that in just inside of my own mind.

[Interviewer (19:08): Thanks for sharing that. And as we um. I kinda want to go into something you brought up earlier with your interaction with the Mayorś office. So think of just accountability stakeholders that you were involved with while you were on the Board. So like with the Mayorś office, or association or the sponsor if you had interaction [Inaudible]. Just in general, tell me how you thought the relationship was between the Board and accountability stakeholders, and what were some of the main takeaways that can define what the relationship

was like from your point of view.

Joey (19:57): The main stakeholder I had experience with was the Mayor´s office through meetings with them. I would say the Mayorś office, and in particular, the representatives that worked on Charter schools. Letś say, they were the, call them the bad cop that compliments the [Midwest] Charter Public school organization, that long acronym, the good cop where it felt, if I remember correctly, maybe I´ll have more memories about the stats. The Charter school organization had a number of events, made a number of connections, were optimistic and positive of forward development of the Charter school. Where the Mayorś office was more critical of our school effort and our model and was certainly less encouraging and more, almost like a veteran that had their war, their jaded war veteran method they were in the trenches and have saw a number of initiatives fail that didn´t kind of vibe with the Mayorś office [Inaudible].

Interviewer (21:39): How do you think [Inaudible 21:40 - 22:01]

Joey (22:03): I think in the moment, I was feeling more forgiving to the Mayorś office [Inaudible word] criticism they thought to our school, at the time might of been more personal. [Inaudible 22:20 - 22:24] here´s the part that the Mayor´s office [Inaudible 22:28 - 22:35] as a [Unclear words] overwhelming problem. [Unclear words here] I was remembering that the Mayorś office looked, saw the education as a total community stakeholder experience from the parents and teachers safehomes and having a to study and things like that and it was almost like there was going be no school that could solve the problem and to a certain extent, the efforts were doomed. In particular for our school, the Mayorś office was critical and skeptical of a teaching high honors curriculum again when they seemed silly, [Unclear words here] I don´t know them close enough, but preoccupied with the homelife of students which seems like it would have [Inaudible 23:53 - 24:04] in the sense that, that demographic would be more at risk or having a less stable home life and [Unclear here] to what extent they [Inaudible 24:19 - 24:22] to white children [Unclear] to think there´d be some [Inaudible].

Interviewer (24:30): I remember the last time we talked [Inaudible 24:35 - 24:40] that [Inaudible] age of some of the Board members that may have made the Mayor´s office somewhat uneasy. Do you recall? Do you want to talk about that at all?

Joey (24.56): Thank you for [Inaudible words here]. As I was a part of them. So the Board at the time was somewhere between ½ to ⅓ College students and the Board founder was a PHD student and the Mayor´s office had a (what would I have been?), junior in a meeting with Mayor´s office about starting a Charter school. It was definitely [Unclear 25:44- 25:56] to start up a Charter school. And, [Inaudible 26:04 - 26:06] for that position. [Unclear 26:10 - 26:13] There was some stage where our Board [Inaudible] off the ground like us getting schools [Inaudible]. There´s a period where the Board, it had to become more of a [Inaudible] in the eyes of the State. I don´t think these were the exact words, [Inaudible] for the Chairman and the Vice Chairman [Unclear word] the Board later moved to bring on more seasoned folks that have a College degree [Inaudible] have experience [Inaudible] because it was related to the prior beliefs of the Board members [Inaudible].

Interviewer (27:15): Thanks. Do you think, if you could rewind the clock. What was one thing

that you would like that you would change about your Charter School Board experience?

Joey (27:34): I think, [Inaudible 27:39 - 27:42] rewinding of the clock, wanted to get more involved as for as [Inaudible] plans. Be more open about the challenges being kind of inner [Inaudible] like I would say things as a Board member, and, specifically, I think one major component was a persistent white joke that I was helping a African American founder start a school for African American but I consistently questioned in a kind of unproductive way what it meant to be a well educated [Inaudible] white college person from the suburbs who was helping low-income African American students improve and [Inaudible] just people being people. But I was concerned and worried about having a type of like white savior complex and a white guilt complex and that´s something I would´ve liked to articulate and discuss more openly with the Board team and to see if anyone else felt that way and to talk about that relationship and I think conversations like that would have improved my learning and my experience and I probably would´ve been better [Inaudible 29:33 - 29:35]. I remember also, me being uncomfortable about any kind of, not forward facing role, but interactions in the community where I may be perceived and some kind of like, white city slicker kind of person that would have [Inaudible].

Interviewer (30:01): [Inaudible 30:01 - 30:05)

Joey (30:06): [Inaudible 30:06 - 30:34) like the video fixture might be useful. We had them [Unclear] that would be useful.

Interviewer (30:43): [Inaudible 30:43 - 30:56] How do you think that the [Unclear word here] of St. Louis impacted the theme and the progress of the school [Inaudible} or African American school in this community or was there any particular importance that you thought had a greater social, political in the whole city [Inaudible] that may have impacted in your experience with your understanding of the school?

Joey (31:38): [Inaudible 31:38 - 31:52] some self awareness of [Inaudible] equality [Inaudible 32:00 - 32:03] inner city. I think it was, at least where on campus was publicized of the St. Louis Public school system was failing that it qualified for a standard access. And I think that was not the idea of a public school not being accredited for the [Unclear] kind of life experience where I´d went. I taught public high school in my hometown [Inaudible] until they got accredited [Inaudible] public high school [Inaudible] And so I come from a background of achieving high quality education [Inaudible] and showing [Inaudible]. If you´re failing your children then your city is robbing [Inaudible] and robbing is kind of an extreme word [Inaudible 33:31 - 33:34] aren´t getting an education. Getting back to a time when people don´t have the kind of education [Inaudible 33:42 - 33:50] a really big [Unclear word] problem it´s hurting the city so [Inaudible] trying not to help someone that was [Inaudible].

Interviewer (34:13): I got a question for you. I remember when we first [Inaudible], when I picked 2 of the [Inaudible] and you added 2 other students who [Inaudible] a team to join together. Do you remember what some of the main reasons were why you added the other student to your group deciding to join this project over some of the other options you had?

Joey (34:51): Yes, first, in terms of the context was personally I didn´t want to join a non-profit.

I had worked in a couple, I can´t remember where, but I thought I wanted to get business experience. Then I think I remember being attracted to the Live Nation team for one reason or another, probably because they had the cool factor and did music. I think, the actual decision was a bit of social, was a bit of fear of missing out where life could be a part of [Unclear here] and was in between joining then heard that my compadres had all decided to go with the school and I thought I don´t want to miss out on this and like not have enough room so I remember sending an email to a Founder and I believe I asked if there was still a spot left [Unclear wording]. But [Unclear] out of that comfort joining where there was a desire to join was pretty simple. [Inaudible 36:24 - 36:26]. The Founder had a great smile and inspiring pitch and seemed like a good guy who wasn´t on some kind of power play and so it was kind of, kind of this person he just seemed like, ya know I remember, he just kind of, just lit up the room. It goes back to people feeling a sort of, kind of a vibe towards them. Yeah.

Interviewer (37:02): Alright, that´s all I have

Interview Location: Phone
Linda Description: Linda - Board Member & Board Chairperson, White Female, 30s
Date: August 16ᵗʰ, 2017
Name of Interviewer: D. McAdoo
Number of Tapes: One (1)
Confirmation of receipt and understanding of the Letter of Consent was received from all Interview participants. Alias names are used in place for real names for all mentioned persons and places.

Interviewer (00:03): So first if you just want to tell me why you decided to join the Board of the charter School?

Linda (00:08): So I was, you've asked me to go back! I was, cause a friend of mine who was someone I respected and admired, and trusted reached out to me personally and said, "Is this an opportunity you'd be interested in? We are looking to expand our Board" and, so it was that personal connection to a friend of mine. I didn't know anyone else and I didn't know much else about the school. And then also, it fit into an area of mine that I had been invested in for a handful of years at that point, education, so, as a former teacher so I was working in the education sector at the time at Teach For America I felt like I had some knowledge and experience. I'd done some policy work around education reform as well, so I felt like there was a match for my skills. And I also, ya know, was very invested in, and still am, in making sure that St. Louis is a place where now every kid especially kids who, black and brown kids can go to a school that's going to make sure they reach their full potential. So I thought in mind with that as well.

Interviewer (01:29): Take a second to describe your overall experience just being on the Board of Directors and if you can think about maybe some things that you found really rewarding about that experience or some challenges and difficulties you can identify.

Linda (01:49): [Inaudible from 01:50 - 0 2:01]. Overall, it was really challenging. It was challenging. I learned a lot. I mean, yeah, I mean, I think challenging is the word for it that comes to mind. Typically, a lot of challenges around, first of all, I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I don't know that anyone ever does necessarily. You don't know what you don't know. I had no idea that, so, I don't remember exactly how everything aligned with your timing when you asked there. I don't recall exactly but shortly after I joined the Board, I was suddenly the Board Chair, like what the hell. That was not what I signed up for, and I took that position because there was like a massive need for someone to grab at the reigns after a series of events led to us having a vacancy in that position. But I don't know that I ever felt like I was the right person for that necessarily. And I think we're going to get into this later but I'm this white person suddenly chairing the Board with a school that is 100% African American kids and families, staff, a lot of staff members. So there were a lot of racial issues, ya know, yeah, racial issues too that I thought about in that position too. I deal with challenges that were fundamental to what it means to govern and be a Board Chair. There were challenges that were more relational

challenges. I can't think of any conflicts necessarily, but like I said, with being the leader of a Board of a school that's all black, there were definitely some challenges there and bias probably. What else? It was really a, I was suddenly swimming in the deep end and really had to take a crash course on a lot of things while also making sure, trying my very best to make sure that everyday, the kids that went to Prestige were getting what they needed out of that experience. And that the people that were supposed to be there everyday were being supported so that those kids could get what was needed. So it was a lot of things coming together at once. So it's hard to identify specific challenges. I feel it was kind of a storm. And then also the context of everything that was going on politically. So like, we had the challenges of achievement indicators that were going down. We had to go thru renewal so there were lots of parallel tracks of challenges I guess I would say. In terms of reward, that's a hard question too. Like I said, I feel like I learned a lot. I feel like I'm always learning and I always want to be in a position where I'm learning a lot. And so I value learning so there's something inherently rewarding about that. But also something that feels very selfish in terms of saying "Oh, it is being rewarding make it about me?" No. I do think that. It was rewarding too, the time when I was able to spend at the school which was never as much as I wanted to. Being able to interact with kids, and as a former teacher and sitting with kids as they were able to learn, get something or have some kind of "a-ha" moment based on what they were doing in class. Those kinds of like small moments were rewarding. Also celebrating kids. So we, I think in my second year term, we started doing regular student celebrations at our Board meetings. So we would regularly recognize kids who had made some growth. Whether it would be in a special subject or something like that or even character growth. So that was really rewarding to bring students in and recognize them formally, and their parents too because it was a team effort and teachers were recognizing teachers who were able to reach some goals with their students. So that was really rewarding. It was rewarding to be with a group of other adults and peers of mine every week, well not every week, every month who were committtted to the school. Committed to investing in kids in this way. Those are some other rewards.

Interviewer (07:28): So, as listening to you talk, you mentioned that some of the challenge of coming, having to Chair basically an all black school and I know you can't really think of any situations, but, if you could describe, how you felt being the Chair of an all black school, and what made that so challenging either like emotional or psychological for you?

Linda (07:56): I think the biggest thing is that I didn't really feel like it was a position that I earned. I think as a leader, you wanna know, in any kind of leadership position, you wanna know that the people that are the beneficiaries or the intended beneficiaries know that you care about them and feel that they can trust you. I had no indicators of any of that. And so, that was really uncomfortable. I think that was probably the biggest piece. So, can you say your question one more time so I can get a clear understanding?

Interviewer (08:52): Yes. What made that position so difficult for you emotionally or psychologically?

Linda (09:00): I think I got you. It was uncomfortable in that way, because I did not know that, or I had not indication that the people in the school whether it be the students, families or staff, trusted me or knew that I cared, that wasn't there. And there's a lot of reason for them to not trust me. I mean, there's a lot of reasons for black people to not trust white people. And so it's not

someone, I can't fault anyone for if they felt that way. It was just uncomfortable. I didn't want to be [Inaudible]. And it's also hard because when you're a Board member of anything, and especially as the Board leader, well, it's a volunteer job. That's another thing too. It's something else to balance and do well. And so even tho I can think of some strategies that was maybe addressed the issue of getting that way. I don't know if I have the [Inaudible} for that, or the time that it would take to do that.

Interviewer (10:20): Ok, thank you, I appreciate that. I want you think about, just the relationship you had with other Board members during your tenure. How would you describe that relationship? Or either any particular relationships that you recall for being rewarding or challenging and why do you think those relationships either were stronger or weaker than you had hoped?

Linda (10:52): So the Board really kinda was [Inaudible} when I joined. Shortly after I joined, it seemed like there was, people started dropping like flies, and they were people that I hadn't even met, so I hadn't even been able to make it to any of the Board meetings since I'd joined. I do feel like because of that, the Board was able to recruit some newer folks, and we were able to kinda start together and build some relationships together that would mean the Board as a whole was more cohesive and had a good working relationship. I will say, I don't know that I had a great -- I don't know that I had a bad relationship, I don't know I had a good relationship with Julian., I hate to mention specific names, but the Board Chair, the person who was assuming the role of Chair when I joined the Board. And the reason I say that, I don't know that we had a bad relationship, but I don't know that we had a good relationship. I realized we definitely didn't have a good relationship, and maybe there wasn't a good relationship with the Board in general when suddenly, I was getting an email saying: "I'm resigning." It was very sudden and it was kinda like, I'm the Vice Chair, and I've gotta step up now and let everyone know, I have to take the reins now, whether that was gonna mean stepping up for the long term or the short term to bring some stability was a different question. But, end up being, I did take the reins for the long term but, that to me, was sort of a breach and that seemed like a very sudden decision that, it was no prior discussion of. It felt very random. Also, I don't know that, and maybe there tends to be factions. Another Board member who had been around for a while, didn't end up lasting much longer, and I was really disappointed when Karen stepped away and I don't know necessarily what that was about. She was not responsive when I tried to reach out and understand, not necessarily like, well yeah I wanted to understand more about why she was stepping away. Not in a way like, "Hey? Will you please stay on the Board?", but what can we learn from your observations? First of all, being a Board member for so long. And second of all, what can the Board do better? So I think Board member on-boarding is really important, and I never had that experience necessarily when I joined the Board, and maybe that would've helped the relationships a little bit better among me and other Board members and also, Board leadership at the time. Relationships matter. They underscore everything. And trust is part of relationships and that's really the foundation of everything I've learned.

Interviewer (14:00): I'm actually gonna kinda dig a little deeper into the stepping back of the two Board members. I remember Karen shot out an email that referenced the whole Michael Brown incident. Do you recall that email? If so, or if not, can you just recall kinda how the Board energy was surrounding Michael Brown at it's peak? What do you remember during that time?

Linda (14:41): [Inaudible from 14:42 - 14:52]. I recall something from an email about that. I don't know if it was a call to action for the Board necessarily but more about like her thinking it. Her thinking like, it was more like a personal reflection on like, this making me think differently about how I'm spending my time or - I very vaguely remember. I probably shouldn't try to speak to it cause I don't remember what were the details necessarily. I think that [Inaudible]... the thing that led to Karen leaving the Board, she had or she did not agree with the direction we were going with, hiring an Interim leader for the school. I think she disagreed with our approach to that and also, she didn't like the candidate we ended up selecting for that interim position. Michael Brown happened and I remember checking in with our Interim school leader at the time. I don't think that the Board had an explicit conversation about that. My memory is fuzzy, but I do remember talking very explicitly with the Interim school leader at the time about, "How are you all responding to this? How we letting kids know and families know that they're safe at school here. What are your plans to respond to any kind of, ya know to the emotions that we know kids are probably feeling?" cause when Michael Brown happened, that was like a kick-off to a series unrest in the community. Then [another police killing] happened shortly after that. I think even it was less than a year, or almost a year after Michael Brown was killed, there was another incident at [on the North Side of St. Louis], I think it was another Police killing. And that happened to be on some of the bus routes for Prestige so I remember thinking on that, "How are we responding to, not just responding to that but reaching out very explicitly about that with to the school leader. I think there are a lot of things we didn't do right. If I could go back and change how we responded then, it probably would've went differently. All of it also comes down to capacity.

Interviewer (17:25): Right, right. And you know, even as your talking, I'm just thinking so I wasn't aware of all of those incidents that happened in Central City. Do you think, and now that you've brought it up, it's kinda interesting cause it seems like there may be this extra burden that was on the Board or just on Prestige in general as being like an African American school, and having to think specifically like how we're going to respond to these issues. Would you say like as your assessment, during that, that the school had this duty or burden to not only meet all the other academic and fiscal goals, but actually have to think critically or practically or strategically about how to deal with racial issues in a more comprehensive way?

Linda (18:20): [Inaudible from 18:22 - 18:34] You can't be an anti-racist institution without implicating finances and decisions about leadership and governance and. Oh man, Sharry Hanes, you know Sharry Hanes [a charter school leader at another St. Louis school], she has this quote yesterday and her response that she sent out to her, I may be digressing a little bit, but in her response she sent to her school about Charlottesville, and her quote was "Education is inherently political." Which I'm like, "Yes yes yes!" So, I think that connects to what you're asking. So it's a burden, it just felt like something else to do. I think that work is essential. Sharry Hanes' school is definitely that and that has been a priority and focus of theirs since the beginning, although it's evolved. It's different because they did not start out as a, or they aren't, mostly an all black institution. I think that their Board make-up probably more closely reflects the students they are serving, where at Prestige , we didn't. I don't know what it is now, I mean that was something that I tried to make a priority when we recruited new Board members. We brought on some more. We diversified our Board a little bit, but, honestly, white people should be the minority on the Board I think.

Interviewer (20:06): I'm gonna pivot a little bit to talk about relationships with the sponsors. So, in your opinion, can you like describe how you felt the sponsor to Prestige during your tenure?

Linda (20:25): I felt like. It seemed to me like in a lot of ways Prestige was like a burden to our sponsor. Ya know our sponsor. The work of our sponsor is apparently political. They're accountable to the State Board. Prestige felt like we were sort of the red flag in their folder when you looked at the rest of the schools they had to sponsor. I felt like and I think partially helpful in this was that I had a relationship with Barry prior to coming to Prestige . I used to work with Barry at Teach for America. We didn't work on any projects together but I knew him. We worked in the same office. And so that helped and everything goes back to relationships and trust. So I think that helped. That gave me a little bit of an edge in kinda smoothing over some of the tension that existed with our sponsor when I came on the Board, or, or started to sort of unfold cause I think Barry was new at the time too. I don't know that there was always tension [Inaudible from 21:55 - 22:00]. I think that gave me an edge in terms of establishing a relationship with the sponsor. And I feel like in general, it was positive. I felt like the sponsor was like truly wanting to be collaborative with us and, they gave us access to some resources that were really helpful. They took a chance on us with recommending renewal of the school, although it tends to make sense when there's been changes in relationship with the sponsor and things are back to not being that great. I'm not sure what's going on. I'm not really tuned in to what's happening now. But I also feel like there was some like, some subtle…Barry's another white guy. And even like, I feel like there was some subtle like sorts of racist and sexist attitude even that were pervasive. So, I remember when Jack stepped off the Board. Barry was like, that's a big loss for you all. You need to find someone that brings the same 'gravitas' that Jack brings, he kept using that word, and I'm like "What does that mean?" To me that's very like, I love Jack, but what does that mean though? That really stuck with me. So I think that was probably at play too, for sure.

Interviewer (23:50): It kinda reminds me of um, so when I was transitioning out and helping with [not clear of phrasing here] that came in, Bill and I had always, so we kinda had that connection too. We both were Yellies, and so I remember when I first met him, I really did not sense any type of animosity or disagreement. He was very cordial, very hospitable. But I remember the first meeting that me, him and Elaine had together. And I was basically trying to give the reins over to Elaine and like this is who you'll be working with in the E D role, and I recall, he never looked her in the eye. And, it was really subtle and I was basically, trying to pull her into the conversation as much as possible, and he would only talk to me. And, at first, I was like, "Ok, maybe it's just me." And I was hoping Elaine isn't picking up on it. But as soon as we walked out that meeting, that's the first thing she said. She said, she was just like, "I've never felt so uncomfortable in my life." And I was picking up on it a little bit, and I was hoping that maybe she wasn't. And I know that he may have had her, he may have had thoughts about her educational ability which is fair. But I thought it was very interesting that I'm basically saying, "This is your E D now" and all his questions kept coming towards me. So, I thought maybe that was just an Elaine thing, but, I think also putting that in context of what you just said also [Inaudible, 25:25 - 25:26]

Linda (25:27): [Inaudible from 25:27 -25:52] Whether or not, that was the right decision to make aside. [Inaudible from 25:56 - 26:02] just like the dynamic, so not just a fast way to

[Inaudible from 26:05 - 26:10] I think that I was probably [not clear} at the time. Probably old enough to have kids when I finished. There was just, um. That was one the worst things I ever had to do. I don't know that, and I think there's probably a lot process and think about unpack about how that situation could have been different. Whether it was the decision itself or the actual action of having to let her go. So that was awful.

Interviewer (26:45): Yeah, I remember that. It was rough. Let me ask you this, Do you recall what the decision making factors were for that event?

Linda (27:03): I think it was clear that. I think that there was a lot. There was a general consensus from the Board that, except for maybe two. Otherwise, I don't necessarily think that Karen's opinion was that we shouldn't let her go. I just think Karen had some different thoughts about what we should do about that position. The general consensus was bad. That she did not bring the full scale back that we were looking for in that position. But, I'd be lying if I said that we weren't getting pressure from Barry to let her go. It was always spoken like, "This isn't my decision. I'm not telling your what to do but..." Which was a difficult position to be in, because I knew we were in a difficult, I knew what was coming down the road with our sponsor in terms of renewal and planning for the worst. Seeing that that was probably the biggest factor, I don't think she, but part of me is like, I don't know how well she was even set up for success in that position. Did we just kind of put her there as a "Hail Mary" because the other things didn't end up working out that we wanted to that the other people that we wanted to bring on? So, I don't know.

Interviewer (28:35): If you could rewind the clock, and change one thing about your Board experience, what would it be and why?

Linda (28:47): That's a big question. (Idle space from 29:00 - 29:25 as Linda ponders an answer) I don't know. I think that if I could do anything differently, I just don't think about the experience. I don't know. You should of sent that one ahead of time, so I could have thought longer on it. There's still nothing coming to mind right now.

Interviewer (30:06): You don't have to answer if there's nothing that comes to mind. I mean that's totally fine.

Linda (30:07): But I also don't want that answer to sound like there's nothing I would've done differently or there's nothing that I would of changed. Or, ya know. I don't know that I could just think of like one thing. Yeah, I wish that...either we can come back to that or I can let you know.

Interviewer (30:41): One of the things I want to do with in some of my interviews is what we call a cross check of things that have been discussed at other interviews. So one of the topics that came up with some other interviewees and focus group lindas was this feeling of certain people on the Board, either because of sex or because of race, feeling as though their qualifications were constantly in question by either other Board members or other stakeholders such as the sponsor or the Mayor's office, anything like that. Do you have an thoughts on whether or not you ever felt like certain folks on the Board gave the impression that their qualifications were in question or have you ever questioned anyone's qualifications that were on the Board or have you just seen that happening from the outside looking in at any point?

Linda (31:27): [Inaudible]

Interviewer (31:45): So some of the folks who I've interviewed felt as thouh the level of credibility that they were given on the Board was in question by other Board members or by the stakeholders and they believed the reason for that was that they didn't feel that other people felt that they were as qualified to perform certain jobs or certain advice. Part of that rationale was either because of their race or sex. Have you seen anything like that or what's your thoughts on whether or not that you've ever experienced that within the Board itself or between the Board and stakeholders.

Linda (32:33): [Inaudible from 32:33 - 32:51]...which is fine, but I also think that makes a lot of assumptions about qualifications and what's necessary. And so I think he [Barry, the sponsor] wanted to see people with money and access and I think that the Board and the school probably what they needed more, we needed resources don't get me wrong, but I also think that there was an under valuing of context expertise. People with professional experience in the education system of Central City, or people with life] experience as a black person in Central City or that sort of thing gets under valued by stakeholders like our sponsor. So I think that there's a lot of bias tapped into what it means to be qualified on a Charter school Board that is serving minority students. So I don't know that I picked up on that as much at the Board level. Although, personally, I always felt like my qualifications, not directly, but I think it was more just tied into my own discomfort. Like, how am I even qualified to be on this Board? I don't have any of those context expertise necessarily. I was a teacher for a minute but I can't claim to be like a lifelong educator. Ya know, I did Teach for America, and there's a lot wrapped in that too. I'm not here cause I wanna be a savior. So I don't know if I was qualified. I'm being hard on myself, I'm being honest.

Interviewer (34:44): So when you guys, when the Board had discussions on staffing and hiring or either adding to the Board. How did race come up in those discussions, or did race come up in those discussions? Both in like firing of leaders and staff and adding folks to the Board.

Linda (35:04): [Inaudible from 35:04 - 35:15]We had to a [Unclear on word used here] pool of applicants. That's about as far as it got. Ya know, I've grown a lot since then too so I don't know, again, if I could go back, I think probably. Well, I don't know, I think that I would try to be more comfortable being more explicit about, "Ok, let's be a little bit more intentional when we talk about diversity". not just what it means, but why it's important. So it came up in a very like, socially acceptable corporate way as it tends to do.

Interviewer (36:00): Ok, just as a last question. Is there just any other thoughts you'd like to share overall or anything else you think is worthy to be contributed to your overall thoughts on your experience at Prestige ?

Linda (36:20): No, it's been difficult circling back on this.

Interviewer (36:30): It's like a little bit of therapy right?

Linda(36:35): Yeah, a little bit, but I've reconciled everything. Ya know, it's only been about a year since I stepped off the Board and like I said, I really haven't been [not sure of word used here]. I think the current Board Chair and I met last fall and at one point, she just wanted to get my perspective on a challenge related with the sponsor and, cause as you know, maybe you know or don't know. They tried to not be sponsors. I think there's still a lot. I think I was glad to be done with it when I was done with it and I know that sounds really bad, but I think when I

was done with it, I like, closed that book and haven't really opened it up since then. I think there's still a lot to be processed and think thru. I really, just personally, especially since Michael Brown was killed. I think I've been on a journey for a long time to this end. But I'm always thinking about "What is my role in social justice/ anti-racist work as a white person?" What should it be, what should it not be? I think there's some things for me to connect there as I ask those questions of myself with my experience with Prestige . So it's been good. I feel a little if-y sometimes about how things went down whether it be with [not sure of phrase here] or Julian and Karen and even with you [to Researcher], we didn't really overlap. I think it's really cool that you're visiting this as part of your Dissertation topic and just in general like for Prestige on a micro level but also at a macro level. I think that this is a topic that could be more important.

Interviewer (38:45): Oh, thank you so much, I'm turning off the recording.

August 12, 2014

From:

Karen ███████ , Board Treasurer
Prestige Charter Academy
Board of Directors

To:

Linda ██████ Board Chairman
Prestige Charter Academy
Board of Directors

Dear Mrs. **Linda** ██████

RE: Resignation from Board of Directors

Herewith is my letter of resignation from the Board of Directors of **Prestige Charter**
Academy. My resignation will take effect immediately.

After being on the Board of Directors for 5 years, I have seen the changes in the
Administration, the Board of Directors, students and the culture/city we live in. I have
expressed my disappointment over the numerous leadership changes as a result of the
departure of **The Founder** I have also expressed my dissatisfaction with the Board
on the recent position changes and direction in managing the school. At this point I
believe we need to agree to disagree. I joined this board with the child like hope of
creating a better world for a population of inner city kids that would receive the great
opportunity to attend a college preparatory school. An opportunity to remove them
from natural, spiritual and mentally impoverished environments. Year after year I
have watched this hope turn from a glimmering light to a faint existence. At this point
Prestige does not have a visionary nor a sound plan to reinstate the vision of the
school. As an African American woman I understand the dire need for the vision of
Prestige to be relentless in its efforts to ensure a group of young African American
kids an opportunity to attend and graduate from college. This goal for an African
American girl or boy is a steep uphill battle. The life that these young people face is
not an easy one and the recent killing **Daniel Johnson** and subsequent rioting in our
city is evidence of this. This young man paid the cost; by graduating from high
school, enrolled in college and yet in still his best efforts and those of his family were
killed. I understand this may be difficult for you to grasp, but the need for the VISION

182

of **Prestige** to be strong is critical. The best prepared African American male could have their dreams halted by simply walking down the street. In recent days I have spoken to colleagues, affluent African American men and women that are outraged at the blatant racism and injustice in our society. There was a time that I was confident in promoting **Prestige** as the change our society needed to help answer these problems. Today I am only confidant that **Prestige** is not addressing these problems. This will be a hard challenge for you, particularly because your understanding of the real issues are limited. Although my hope is now faint in **Prestige** there is still hope in the efforts so many people have put into this school before your time and I pray my personal commitments and investments in this school will produce something tangible. I hope that the board and administration will recover well from the insensitive comments made by **A teacher** I hope the staff and administration will seek to put the children and families first every day they enter the school. I hope the vision and spirit of **Prestige Charter** Academy reemerges as a beacon of light in our currently dark community. Of course I continue to pray for the best of the school, board, staff, children and families. Yet currently I believe my efforts are better spent in serving our community in other capacities. I wish to thank the Chairman of the Board for all your hard work and all Board Members for their support and input during my tenure on the Board.

I wish you all well.

Yours Sincerely,

Karen

Prestige Charter

A World-Class Education in the Heart of **Central City**

ACADEMY

Prestige

LEADERS OF EXCELLENCE ACADEMY

School Vision

Prestige Charter Academy will serve as an incubator for future American Leaders.

Prestige Student will become a testimony of triumph as he/she gains regional recognition for his/her intellectual depth, exceptionally groomed talents, and upright character.

Prestige Graduate will become the model for honorable leadership by exemplifying integrity, sacrifice, and determination as he/she labors for the betterment of our community & country.

Prestige will instill a national alumni network of men and women who defied environmental limitations to become prosperous leaders and innovators in the world of Art, Business, Civic Service, Medicine, Research, Politics, and beyond.

School Mission

To fully equip our students with the academic, social, leadership and character qualities needed to enter into AND graduate from top universities.

About the School

Prestige Academy is a 5th - 12th grade, independent, and charter school currently serving students in ... to ... grade. We offer 100% Free Tuition to ... who ... lives within ... y Academy's mission, our academic goals are informed by the reasoning core beliefs:

Prestige

1. We must ensure the quantifiable academic achievement of our students.
2. We must demand that every child can, and will, succeed academically given **Central City**
3. We must maintain an uncompromising achievement focused school culture at all times.

Student Body Profile

2012 – 2013 Enrollment Facts:

Grades Enrolled: 5th through 7th
Students Enrolled: **140 students**
Student to Teacher Ratio: **14 to 1**
Students who live in **Central City**: **100%**
Students who are African American: **98%**
Students who receive Free & Reduced Lunch: **93%**
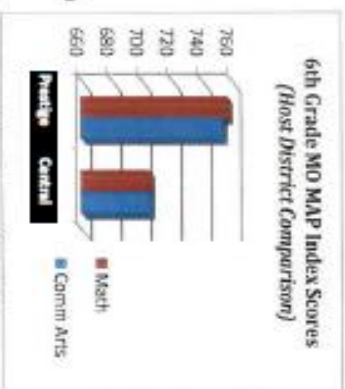
Prestige

LEADERS OF EXCELLENCE ACADEMY

Academic Performance
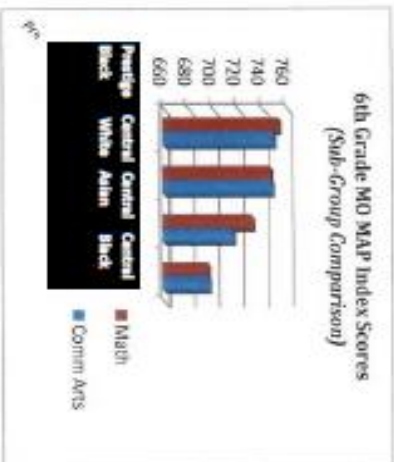
2012 MO MAP Scores:

Prestige students greatly outperformed its host district

Central City Schools) in *BOTH* Math and Communication Arts on the state's standardized **** test.

Furthermore, African-American sixth grade students at **Prestige** out-performed White and Asian students in the host district in *BOTH* Math and Communication Arts. Thus, Prestige has successfully eliminated the racial achievement gap in its first year of operation.

African-American sixth graders at **Prestige** were among the highest performing black students in the state and out-performed their African-American peers in some of the area's most affluent and successful suburban districts, including **** (in Communication Arts) as well as **** (in Mathematics).

Out of **All Charter and Central** schools **Prestige** had the second highest African-American student test scores in the city among sixth graders. **Prestige** was second only to the African-American students at the city's magnet school for gifted children. When accounting for all students sub-groups, **Prestige** had the 4th highest Math and 6th highest Comm. Arts scores in the city.

6th Grade MO MAP Index Scores
(Host District Comparison)

	Math	Comm Arts
660		
680		
700		
720		
740		
760		

Prestige | Central

6th Grade MO MAP Index Scores
(Sub-Group Comparison)

	Math	Comm Arts
660		
680		
700		
720		
740		
760		

Prestige Black | Central White Asian | Central Black

Board Member Engagement Survey 1.0

1. What is your gender?
- Female
- Male

2. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? [You may mark all that apply]
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White / Caucasian
- Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

3. What is your age range?
- 20-29yrs
- 30-39yrs
- 40-49yrs
- 50-59yrs
- 60-69yrs
- 70-79yrs
- 80yrs+

4. What is your current/ most recent occupation?

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- High school diploma or equiv.
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school
- Master's Degree/ Professional degree
- Doctorate

1

6. What is your relationship to St. Louis City? (Mark all the apply)
- Live in the city
- Live in the surrounding areas/ suburbs of the city
- Grow up in the city
- Work in the city
- Attended school in the city
- Other (please specify)
- Family lives in the city
- Children attend school in the city
- Volunteer in the city
- Visit the city for entertainment purposes
- Attend church in the city

7. Do you, or did you ever, serve on the Board of Directors (as Trustee or Exofficio) for a charter school in St. Louis?
- Yes
- No

8. If yes, during what years did you serve? [Mark all that apply]
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017

2

9. What were your top TWO reasons for joining the board? [Please select only TWO options]

- ☐ I was asked by a friend or associate to join
- ☐ I was looking for intellectual stimulation
- ☐ I desired professional training and/or development
- ☐ Prestige of position/profession
- ☐ Opportunity to be of service to my community
- ☐ I feel it's important to give back
- ☐ I want to directly support social uplift for in the African American community
- ☐ I want to see change in the educational systems and options in my community
- ☐ I wanted to build a school that could better meet the needs of black students
- ☐ I want to a great school and want others to have the opportunity
- ☐ I went to a horrible school and want to ensure others don't have to go through what I went through
- ☐ I believed in the school mission and vision
- ☐ I believe in charter schools as a policy stance
- ☐ I wanted to have a voice/ownership in directing how an organization should be run
- ☐ I have a lot to offer nonprofits and I thought it was important to share my knowledge
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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10. What did you see as your primary responsibilities as a board member? (please select no more than THREE options).

- ☐ Determine the mission and purpose of school and keep it clearly in focus
- ☐ Select the School Leader
- ☐ Oversee and approve contract negotiation and renewal
- ☐ Support and review the performance of the School Leader
- ☐ Ensure effective organizational planning – Approve an annual organizational plan that includes concrete, measurable goals consistent with the charter and accountability plan.
- ☐ Ensure adequate resources
- ☐ Assist in carrying out the development plan
- ☐ Approve/monitor the annual budget
- ☐ Determine, monitor, and strengthen the programs and services
- ☐ Monitor progress in achieving academic outcomes and goals
- ☐ Serve as ambassadors, advocates, and community representatives
- ☐ Work to provide a quality service that can support community uplift and education
- ☐ Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability
- ☐ Adhere to local, state and federal laws and regulations that apply to the school.
- ☐ Recruit and orient new board members and assess board performance
- ☐ Other (please specify)

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [Mark one for each question.]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree/ It Depends	Agree	Strongly Agree
In America today, every person has an equal opportunity to achieve economic success.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree/It Depends	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most students are treated fairly in schools in my community, despite the students' race.	○	○	○	○	○
Black student and white students are treated differently in most schools in my area.	○	○	○	○	○
Race has little impact on one's ability to succeed in my community.	○	○	○	○	○
My city has long standing issues with race.	○	○	○	○	○
Schools in my community are racially divided.	○	○	○	○	○
People at the bottom of the economic ladder do not work as hard as those at the top.	○	○	○	○	○
The pursuit of social justice is a critical need in my community.	○	○	○	○	○
In America today, every person has an equal opportunity to achieve economic success.	○	○	○	○	○
I believe black students benefit more when they have black teachers.	○	○	○	○	○
Some of the best teachers of black students I know are white.	○	○	○	○	○
Academic achievement should be the sole purpose of every school.	○	○	○	○	○
I believe a great school can change a struggling community.	○	○	○	○	○

12. Thinking about your own experience on the Board of Directors, do you feel you have ever experienced discrimination or adverse treatment from FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS due to your RACE?

○ No
○ Yes, a Little
○ Yes, a Lot

13. Thinking about your own experience on the Board of Directors, do you feel you have ever experienced discrimination or adverse treatment from FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS due to your GENDER?

○ No
○ Yes, a Little
○ Yes, a Lot

14. Thinking about your own experience on the Board of Directors, do you feel you have ever experienced discrimination or adverse treatment from ACCOUNTABILITY STAKEHOLDERS (i.e. the sponsor, mayor's office, DOE, etc) due to your RACE?

○ No
○ Yes, a Little
○ Yes, a Lot

15. Thinking about your own experience on the Board of Directors, do you feel you have ever experienced discrimination or adverse treatment from ACCOUNTABILITY STAKEHOLDERS (i.e. the sponsor, mayor's office, DOE, etc) due to your GENDER?

○ No
○ Yes, a Little
○ Yes, a Lot

16. Would you consider the school board you served on to be diverse in racial/ethnic background?

○ No
○ Yes, a Little
○ Yes, a Lot

188

17. In your experience, how often have the following happened to you during your experience on the board? [Mark one for each question]

	Never	Less than once a year	A few times a year	A few times a month	Almost every encounter
a. You are treated with less courtesy than other people.	○	○	○	○	○
b. You are treated with less respect than other people.	○	○	○	○	○
a. You felt people were more critical of your performance.	○	○	○	○	○
a. People treated you as if you are not as smart/capable as others.	○	○	○	○	○
People acted as if they were afraid of you.	○	○	○	○	○
People acted as if you were a dishonest person.	○	○	○	○	○
h. You felt your opinion was not valued.	○	○	○	○	○

18. If you are no longer on the Board of Directors, what was the reason for you leaving the board? [Please type your response]

19. Is there anything else you would like to share to help the researcher better understand your experiences and views as a Charter School Board Member?

African American Charter School Board Member

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Preparation Points:

- Introduce purpose of research and facilitator
- Statement of informed consent
- Confidentiality and pseudonyms
- Overview of focus group "ground rules" and process
- Respond to any questions from participants

NOTE: Follow-up questions or prompts will be generated for the following questions during the focus group to encourage full participation, explore emergent topics, build depth of understanding, and bring clarity to the questions. Remind participants to say name prior to speaking for transcribing purposes.

Icebreaker/ Lean-in

1) Why is educating black youth important too you?
2) Why did you join the board of the site school?
3) What was most rewarding thing with being on the board/ the most frustrating?

Educational Philosophy

4) Do you believe current educational systems/ schools can be harmful to black students? If so, why and how do you feel they are harmful?
5) How did you use, or want to use, your involvement in the site school to support change in this area?

Member Interactions:

6) How would you describe your general interactions with board members?
7) Describe interaction with non-black members of the board? How were they different than with black board members?
8) Can you tell me of an event or instance when you feel race played a major part in how the board interacted with each other or perceived situations/outcomes differently?

Sponsor Interactions:

9) Who was the sponsor when you were on the board?
10) How would you describe your general interactions with the school's sponsor (or other accountability stakeholders)?
11) Can you tell me of an event or instance when you feel race played a major part in how you interacted with the sponsor (or other accountability stakeholders) or perceived situations/outcomes differently?

Key Moments:

12) How did you feel as a board member after the Michael Brown incident and the surrounding protests?
13) How do you feel your sentiments were received/understood/misunderstood from nonwhite board members?

Closing:

14) If you could share anything with future board members of other schools (black or white) so that they can better serve their community, what would you say?

Charter School Board Members

Semi-Structured Interview Prompt

Interview Preparation Points:

- Introduce purpose of research and facilitator
- Statement of informed consent
- Confidentiality and pseudonyms
- Respond to any questions from participants

NOTE: Follow-up questions or prompts will be generated for the following questions during the interview to explore emergent topics, build depth of understanding, and bring clarity to the questions.

1) Why did you join the board of the site school?
2) How would you describe your overall experience on the board of directors with Prestige? What did you find rewarding and/or difficult?
3) How would you describe the relationship among board members?
4) In your opinion, how did race impact relationships between board members?
   a. *Follow-up if prominent event or theme arises from answer.*
5) Do you recall the situation/event when [*describe situation that came up from focus group*]? Can you tell me, in your opinion, what happened there?
   a. *Follow-up*: Do you believe race had anything to do with the interactions or outcomes in that situation? If so, in what ways?
6) Think of a time when the board disagreed about a certain decision or course of action, such as in hiring, student discipline, strategic planning, etc. (*Pause*). Describe that situation and tell me what you believe was the root of the disagreement?
   a. *Follow-up*: In what ways was race directly or indirectly involved in the decision-making process?
      i. *Examples*: *If it was a hiring decision, was the candidate's race important? If strategic planning, was the board split along racial lines (black board members on one side and white board members on the other)? If addressing student issues, how did the race of student come up?*
   b. *Follow-up*: What was the ultimate decision/outcome of this situation and why do you think the board arrived at that outcome?
7) Do you think there was a difference in the way Prestige board members were treated (compared to other schools) by the school's sponsor or other accountability stakeholders? If so, how?
8) Do you think black and white Prestige board members were treated differently by the school's sponsor or other accountability stakeholders? If so, how?

9) If you could rewind the clock and change one thing about your Prestige charter school experience, what would it be and why?

10) Is there anything else you would like to add/share about your Prestige board member experience?

Letter of Invitation to Participate

Month/Day, 2017

Hello [Name],

This is Daryl McAdoo a fellow former board member of ABC Charter School. As a doctoral student at the University of California, Los Angeles in the School of Education, I am completing my dissertation in board member intergroup relations.

Because of your role with the board of directors for ABC school during 2009 - 2015, I am asking you to aid me in this process. At this time, I am simply requesting you complete a 20-minute survey about your board experiences. Some (not all) participants may also be invited to participate in a brief interview or focus group. My hope is to better understand how board member relations, accountability holders, and racialized contexts influence board experience. Your insight would be invaluable to me as I complete this work.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point in the study without any adversity from either the University of California, Los Angeles, or the researcher. Your confidentiality will be maintained.

If you have any questions about the nature of this project, you may contact me at CONFIDENTIAL. Furthermore, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of California, Los Angeles Office of the Human Research Protection Program at 310-825-7122.

Attached is an Informed Consent Form that fully explains the research process and your rights as a participant.

I will contact you in the next few weeks with further participation details if you agree. Thank you so much for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Daryl McAdoo, Research Investigator

Letter of Informed Consent

TITLE OF STUDY

Understanding the Role of Race in Intergroup Experiences of Charter School Board Members

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Daryl McAdoo

Higher Education & Organizational Change

University of California, Los Angeles

CONFIDENTIAL

PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study: An ever growing body of literature is illuminating the fact that the effectiveness of charter schools in achieving their outcomes is related to the characteristics, composition, and practices of their boards of directors (Baysinger & Butler, 1985; Herman & Renz, 2000; Pfeffer, 1973; Siciliano, 1996; Zald, 1967). Yet, despite this heightened scrutiny on school boards there has been little-to-no attention given to how charter boards and race dynamics interact with each other, even though it has been unequivocally established, both historically and empirically, that race and educational outcomes are inextricably linked. Little is known as to how race impacts board member experience among board members and with powerholding, accountability stakeholders. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the impact that race has on those seeking to serve their community through charter school board membership - with special consideration given to African American experiences and interactions - and how contextual environments, interactions and systems influence board experience, attitudes, and engagement.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Your participation in this study will be comprised of one or more of the following:

Questionnaire (Select Participants; 20 minutes): Participants will be asked to complete a 20-minute survey, which you will complete online through a secure site portal.

Focus group (Select Participants; 60 minutes): Approximately three (3) participants will be asked to participate in an identity-based, focus group to discuss personal motivations for joining the board and how they believed race impacts board experience The focus group should last roughly 60 minutes.

Interview (Select Participants; 40 minutes): Approximately four (4) participants who were not involved in the focus group will be asked to participate in a semi-structure interview to explore themes of board member experiences and interaction in more depth. The interview will last, on average, 40 minutes.

The total amount of time requested from participants will be 20-25 minutes for those participating in the survey round only, and roughly 60 to 90 minutes for those also participating in a focus group or interview. Focus groups and interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.

RISKS

Some people are uncomfortable talking about themselves and/or about issues of race and this may cause light (non-physical or medical) social discomfort. Any discomfort experienced should be no more than that normally experienced during a small group discussions involving race and personal experiences. If any discomfort seems to occur during discussion or during completion of the questionnaire, the participant will have every opportunity to discontinue participation in the study, or any part thereof, and will be free to leave/stop without penalty.

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

Through this research, we will gain a better understanding of how intergroup relations, race, and accountability stakeholders impacts board functions, experiences and interpersonal interactions, which ultimately impacts board success. Furthermore, we will understand how charter schools work to promote/ truncate certain voice in board leadership and in what ways leaders and community stakeholders can better steer educational efforts to support urban communities. Such efforts will improve board relations, school leadership and school success.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.
- Using fictitious name for the charter school and general "Midwest" region to identify location (with no specification of city or state).
- Removing as many identifiable markers as able from transcripts, survey data and site description.

All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the focus group between the participants only. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please contact the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program, 10889 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 830, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406, (310) 825-7122. You may also contact the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Walter R. Allen, at CONFIDENTIAL.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. After you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

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219

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