A Study of Community Cohesion's Impact on School Board Cohesion

By
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Abstract

Much of the current literature on school boards addresses the board's dysfunctions in different areas such as being over-bureaucratic, pandering to special interest groups, micro-managing, focusing on business instead of education, and being too political. However, with each of these failures there is a gap in the literature. The literature, in each occasion, addresses the dysfunction without accounting for the impacts community level factors have on school boards. This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature that exists and address the degree to which the community has an influence on the school board. By utilizing economic and political perspectives on community dysfunctions as the underpinnings of board dysfunction, this study will show the element that the current literature is missing. This is important to do because examining such dynamics as board failure without understanding contextual elements of the community would be ineffective in understanding why the board fails.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Much of the current literature on school boards addresses the board's dysfunctions in different areas such as being over-bureaucratic, pandering to special interest groups, micro-managing, focusing on business instead of education, and being too political. However, with each of these failures there is a gap in the literature. The literature, in each occasion, addresses the dysfunction without accounting for the impacts community level factors have on school boards. This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature that exists and address the degree to which the community has an influence on the school board. By utilizing economic and political perspectives on community dysfunctions as the underpinnings of board dysfunction, this study will show the element that the current literature is missing. This is important to do because examining such dynamics as board failure without understanding contextual elements of the community would be ineffective in understanding why the board fails.

In recent years one of the areas of education that has begun to fall under strict scrutiny is the way education is governed. Questions are being asked as to which form of school governance is the most effective. Should school governance be centralized or decentralized? Should schools continue to be run by school boards or should small local site councils run each school individually? This debate about which form of school governance is the best remains unanswered and research has yet to give a definitive answer as to which is better. However, an even more crucial question needs to be asked, where does this debate come from?

Not since the early 1900's has there really been a vast change in the way that school boards have been elected, changing from a massive ward system into something more similar to the system of boards we see today (Kirst 1994). Of course, other forms of governance have been created as substitutions, however, no true impact has been made on the overall format of school

governance since the move from the ward system. This does not mean that school boards have not been evaluated, simply that they have not been vastly changed. In fact, school boards as a system of governance have come under a lot of scrutiny, which is the reason for the debate in the first place. Critics claim that school boards are over-bureaucratic, that they pander too much to special interest groups, they are too political, and the list goes on (Ainley and McKenzie, 2000; Danzberger, 1994; Johnson, 2012; Kowalski, 2006; Land, 2002; Ziebarth, 1999). It is out of these criticisms that comes the purpose of this research study. Researchers have done a thorough study on the failings of school boards, and to a certain extent, options for improving school board functionality. However, one area greatly lacking research is the cause of school board failings. While there may be several causes for several failings, for the purpose of this study attention will be given to how the community can impact the efficacy of a school board. In other words, how does the cohesion of a community within which a school board governs, impact the divisiveness of a school board?

To help expand the literature that exists, this study will address the community's influence on the school board by examining literature in four specific areas. These areas are, the criticisms of the school board, community connection through school board literature, community connection through sociological literature focusing on the impact of outside sources on bureaucracies like school boards, and community connection through socio-political literature. For the purpose of this study, Kansas City Missouri Public Schools (KCMO) and Blue Valley Public Schools will be used as the school boards that are being correlated with their communities.

KCMO has a very diverse past with records reaching all the way back to the early 1900's. KCMO has gone through several desegregation lawsuits as well as significant community

population shifts that should have an interesting direct impact on the school board. Theoretically, when looking at KCMO's school board minutes starting in the 1960's that show school board decisions, these decisions should correlate with the way that the community votes on related issues. If the community is divided with its decision making when looking at voting results, then the school board should echo that sentiment by being divided with its decisions. This may answer the question, can there be a functioning system of governance in a society that is divided itself? Or, perhaps other issues such as socioeconomic factors play a more important role than the extent to which a community is cohesive or divided.

Blue Valley School district is being used because it is situated in a much more affluent community. If this study is to show the influence the community has on the board then it is important to use communities on opposite spectrums. Since economic and political perspectives are used as the underlying factors of understanding community dysfunction, then a community that is more stable, such as Blue Valley, makes an optimal comparative district to KCMO.

The purpose and contribution of this study is to fill in the gaps in the literature that exist within the debate on school governance. As of right now, very little literature exists on school board efficacy, but even less exists on what causes a school board to develop faults and become divided. It is for this reason why this study is both unique and essential. This is the only study that seeks to explain why school boards become so divisive and specifically what impact the community plays on school board cohesion. However, filling in this gap in the research is not enough, it also plays an important role in the school board and community relations. If the hypothesis is proven true, and community cohesion does have an impact on school board cohesion, then future school board and systems of education can pay closer attention to the

community within which they educate and perhaps develop systems in which they control for the impact the community has on the school board and on the system of education as a whole.

Considering the opposite side of the spectrum is also important as well. Perhaps the hypothesis of this study will not come to fruition, in which case, this raises several very important questions that unfortunately this study cannot address. First and foremost, is a school board as representative of its constituency as it should be? One reason school boards come under criticism, which will be discussed more in depth in the review of literature, is because they do not actually represent the community within which they govern (Danzberger, 1994; Kowalski, 2006; Land, 2002; Ziebarth, 1999). This is also interesting considering that on average only around 10 to 15 percent of the population vote in school board elections (Land, 2002). Could this mean that the school board is not actually a system of representative democracy? Perhaps the only reason school boards are considered a representative democracy is because they are voted as such, but once they enter into practice, they stop being such. It is hard to say, within the scope of this project that, in fact, a board is or is not a system of representative democracy, but perhaps this is something that further research could be conducted on.

Also important for this study is application to other fields of study, not just education. In fact, it is within these other fields of study that ancillary research is found to help fill in the current gap. If the hypothesis of this study is supported, then what does that tell us? Perhaps it gives us an idea that if a community is divided, then any form of governance that works within that community will be divided as well. That would mean that in communities where diversity is high in both opinions and culture, the governing body in that community will also be diverse and have a greater chance of being divisive. On the opposite side, communities that are more cohesive in culture and opinions would more than likely have a higher functioning system of

governance. This would tend to support the stereotype that school boards in inner cities, where community cohesion is low, are usually more divided and function less efficiently than those in suburban areas where community cohesion is greater. Along those same lines, if we apply this thought process to the bigger picture, we can look at governments that oversee entire countries. In a country that is divided culturally and philosophically, the government that oversees them should thereby be more divisive as well. In a country where the populace has more likeness to one another, then theoretically their governing body should function with a greater cohesion. This is of course assuming that there are a lot of underlying similarities in educational governance as there are in statehood governance, which once again, is outside of the reach of this research study.

However one considers this study, the most important thing to consider is still its impact on education and specifically understanding of the school board. In understanding any practice lies a greater ability to improve that practice, and the same is true with school boards. In understanding not only how they are failing but also what causes those failures, a greater ability to improve the school board arises. Since none of the current research on school boards accounts for the impact of the community, that is where this study will seek to step in. This study reviews the current literature with the intent to show that there is a current gap in research focusing on the relationship between the community and the school board. Perhaps in understanding why the school board becomes so divisive, education can begin to fix those divides and improve school board governance.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The first theme of literature that needs to be reviewed is literature dealing directly with school boards and school board efficacy. As school boards begin to fall under more and more scrutiny, several researchers have begun to criticize school board effectiveness. However, they have done so without taking into account the effects of the broader community. It is believed, among many other things, that school boards tend to micro-manage too often, do not focus on student achievement enough, do not represent their electing body, and most importantly have a fractured and divided culture (Ainley and McKenzie, 2000; Danzberger, 1994; Johnson, 2012; Kowalski, 2006; Land, 2002; Ziebarth, 1999). These criticisms point to why school boards are believed to be ineffective, so it is vitally important that it be understood what causes the failures and account for the community influence. Through the literature on the debate about the most effective form of school governance, one should be able to gain context into how these deficiencies in school boards play a role in the broader debate.

School Board Criticisms

One of the first criticisms or in this specific case, questionings, of the school board comes from whether or not the school board is the best system for student achievement. But how accurate is this criticism of boards and how much impact does the board even have on student achievement? As researchers continue analyze the most effective form of school governance, many scholars have focused on which forms of school governance are the most effective, and for what reasons. The direct effect of school governance is difficult to measure; however, researchers have tried comparing different schools in different settings to ascertain a relationship between governance and achievement. It is important to note that some of these differences may lie outside of school governance (i.e. socioeconomic, cultural diversity, etc.), and since these

studies do not rule out the impact of these factors over school governance it points to further research needed. According to Bosker and Scheerens "There is now an emerging consensus that between eight and 15 percent of the variance in achievement outcomes is associated with the school attended" (as cited in Ainley and McKenzie, 2000, p. 6). According to more recent research, when school districts in Pennsylvania were analyzed for their impact on achievement, they were shown to have up to a ten percent effect on standardized testing when analyzing their social capital (Saatcioglu and Sargut, 2014). With that understanding, some researchers believe that when looking at schools with different forms of governance, variation in achievement can be explained by the form of governance. However, as pointed out, what this research lacks is the impact that the community has on these different forms of governance.

In citing several examples of changes introduced to school systems, Ainley and McKenzie (2000) point out that while these serve as examples of increased achievement in districts moving away from the typical local school board governance model, the majority of them also have other measures they enacted in order to increase achievement. One such example is in the Philadelphia schools, where the school district moved to a decentralization model with School Councils overseeing each individual school, in place of school boards. The school's test scores improved; however it cannot be assumed that it was from decentralization or from the addition of monitoring programs linked to new interventions (Ainley and Mckenzie, 2000).

Ainley and McKenzie (2000) also address the differences on a broader scale when looking at private schools and Catholic schools. Both of these examples focus on school governance that replaces the traditional model of school boards with a site-based system. Both of these examples also show an average increase in student achievement versus public schooling. However, once again the differences can be attributed to outside factors and not necessarily

related to school governance. The community impact on a parochial school would be vastly different than that of a public school and because of this gap in the literature, very few conclusions can be drawn without doubt.

There are several other examples of changes to the traditional school board governance model. Vouchers, charter schools, and decentralization at the state level are all examples of ways that some districts have begun to move away from the top-down traditional model of school board governance. The opposite extreme exists as well, several districts have moved to a much more centralized system of governance. Examples of this include state and mayoral takeovers. In all of these examples it is difficult to say whether or not these different systems are more effective for student improvement than school boards mostly because they do not account for the impact of the community. Each one has its advantages and disadvantages that can be addressed, on impacts with school climate, teacher or parent attitudes and decision making (Ziebarth, 1999). Taking this into consideration, one cannot give a definitive answer to the question of the most effective form of school governance when dealing with student achievement. With that in mind, it would be more beneficial for this study to focus on criticisms of the school board and how those criticisms come into existence.

Another criticism of the school board is its inability to move away from micromanaging and to focus on the changing educational environment (Danzberger, 1994). In referring to this criticism, Ziebarth (1999) states that school boards often seek stability in place of responding to the ever-changing environment of education, which is necessary for success. School boards are such a bureaucratic entity that they tend to have more of an organizational stability due to meeting the needs of state government requirements. This, however, leads to the inherent problem with bureaucracies, and that is their inability to change with the changing times

(Ziebarth 1999). Since education is such an ever-evolving entity, some critics believe that this is a good enough reason to assume that traditional school boards are not equipped to govern school districts. This also relates to what will be discussed later as the sociological literature points to the impact of outside factors on bureaucracies. This criticism of the board still does not account for the impacts that the community has on the board itself. While sociological literature may help to shed some light on the impact, it does not fully account for the influence the community has on the bureaucracy which is what this study seeks to examine. Any other cooperative systemic bureaucracy may function in one type of community much better than in another, without taking that into account, little can be done about this criticism.

Once again, many school districts have turned to a more site-based management system in order to compensate for bureaucratic inertia on school boards. The belief is that site-based management will lead to straight forward decisions by educators who, being educators, are more knowledgeable about current practices. Other solutions to this bureaucratic issue are deregulation (because it theoretically reduces systemic "red tape"), open enrollment (because it is believed to create an environment of competition and school choice, forcing schools to improve), charter schools (because it allows individually run schools without a larger governing system which is believed to reduce bureaucratic systems), and vouchers (because it increases competition and allows funding to follow students and theoretically forces schools to improve) (Ziebarth 1999). While many of these systems seem to be a solution to the problem of stagnant bureaucracies, they also come with their own problems. For example, Noel, Slate, Brown, and Tejeda-Delgado (2008) state that, in their study of site-based decision making, teachers had an issue with their administrators over-collaborating. The administration would spend so much time in site-based management teams that they would often miss deadlines. The teachers would

have preferred that the administrators use their authority to simply make decisions (Noel et al., 2008). Each of these suggested fixes to the bureaucracies of school boards, while fixing this issue, come with their own set of problems and still do not address the community factor. This does not in turn mean that they are the penultimate solution to school boards, nor does it prove that school boards are not the most effective tool for school governance. In fact, in defense of school board bureaucracies, Ziebarth (1994) states that not only do they equalize differences across groups they also have a better ability to respond to complex tasks passed down by state regulations and federal programs. Without addressing the community's influence, methods to fix bureaucratic inertia on the board is likely to fall short.

One last criticism of the typical school board governance model to consider is the pervasive and destructive conflict that can be seen within school boards, which limit the ability to govern (Kowalski, 2013; Danzberger 1994). One of the issues that have been present in school boards is the polarity of the school board's culture and politics in the members. This should not to be mistaken with the culture and the politics of the community, which is what this study is researching. The individual members of the school board bring their own beliefs and cultures, separated from the community, which impact the functionality of the board. There can be several reasons for this, from the divide in the core belief of the purpose of a school board, to the divide created by today's polarized political climate. This type of destructive conflict not only causes issues with decision making but also drives stakeholders away. Divisive school board members tend to evolve into stakeholders not feeling like they are being adequately represented and efficiently managed. What is truly interesting about the polarization is the impact special interest groups have had on school board elections. According to Moe (2003), "a California study found that 92% of school board incumbents endorsed by teacher unions were

elected" (as cited in Kowalski, 2013, p. 123). This shows that in order to influence the school board, interests must be pushed by organized groups instead of individual stakeholders. Because school board members have shifted their focus away from their stakeholders to the interest groups, their ability to govern is diminished by fostering divisiveness among the members.

With this in mind, it is important to consider the alternatives. Site-based management is yet again brought up as a viable alternative to solve the polarity and destructive conflict of school boards. In response to the effectiveness of communication in site-based schools, the committee was described as being a place where decisions could be made while all stakeholders were considered (Noel et al., 2008). Many instances of site-based management were described as culturally positive experiences that lacked the extreme polarization of politics. This can be explained simply by the fact that site-based management teams do not need to be elected and have no reason to answer to special interest groups; their sole purpose is the function of the school and the improvement of students. This being said, there are other issues that arise from site-based management that come from the fix to the polarization issue. For example, site-based management has been described as a process that is over-collaborative and does not lead to efficient decision making causing missed deadlines (Noel et al., 2008). Also, since site-based management teams move away from elections and are more based on appointment by administrators, this can lead to a feeling of disenfranchisement from stakeholders. While one problem is solved by site-based management, several other possible issues arise with the implementation of this governing system. This just shows that simply changing the form of governance does not fix the inherent issues at hand. Solutions that are disconnected from the community and only focus on the school board are going to be less effective. Site-based

management, and other forms of governance like it, are solutions that are completely

disconnected from the community and only focus on the school board itself.

One can see the implications this debate can have on school districts. While a definitive

answer cannot be given on the most effective form of school governance, this literature does give

an idea as to why school boards are viewed as failing. In addition, the research on governance

allows this study to acknowledge the fact that the broader debate is too cumbersome to solve and

gives context to which area this study can focus on. Out of this debate, the failings of the school

board can be targeted as an area this study can focus on and from there what specifically causes

those failings. This broader debate also highlights the gap in the literature that this study seeks to

fill, community factors are continually unaccounted for. Much of the school board research and

solutions are focused only on the school board completely disembodied from the community.

Because of this, these issues continue to be a problem and proposed solutions to them will

continue to fall short.

Insights on Board-Community Connections from School Board Research

When analyzing the relevant literature, it is important to start with why exactly school

governance should be scrutinized at all. As stated before, it is difficult to link different forms of

school governance with positive effects on student achievement. However, what can be

empirically shown is how specific actions taken by school boards can positively affect student

achievement (Johnson, 2012; Saatcioglu and Sargut, 2014). Within these specific practices of

effective school boards is found, practicing unified governance. Unified governance is defined

in this study by a school board functioning with as little destructive conflict and disagreement

between its members as possible (Danzberger, 1994; Delagardelle, 2009; Goodman et al., 1997;

LaRocque & Coleman, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009 as cited in Johnson, 2012). This doesn't

mean that conflict cannot be present on a school board. Rather, conflict or disagreements that take place must have a purpose and not have a crippling effect on the ability for a board to govern. On the other hand, fractured school boards would be defined by members constantly disagreeing, regardless of the issue. A fractured school board would see conflict take precedent over the functioning of the school district, causing further exacerbation of already present issues. Taking this into account, it is evident why an answer must be given to what causes a fractured school board in the first place.

A fractured school board is something critics have been paying attention to for a long time. But what exactly causes the fracturing of a school board still eludes research. One reason some academics point to is the shift in the role of the school board from trustee to delegate. School boards are meant to be viewed as trustees, where they focus on representing the community as a whole and strive toward better student achievement based on the community's interests. However, recently boards have begun to move more towards the role of delegate and away from trusteeship, which means they have lost focus on student achievement and community needs and rather focused on their constituents and special interest groups in order to remain elected (Land 2002). This can lead to tension on a school board, especially when each individual member has separate constituent needs, and can define a fractured school board.

Jacqueline Danzberger (1994) also had the same realization after the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) conducted studies on more than 400 school board chairs. In this study several serving board members as well as other parties involved were surveyed and expressed specific concern with the school board members that have moved away from being a trustee and have begun to focus more on sectional interests. Specifically, teacher unions have grown greatly in their influence on school board members. In one example in Whittier,

California, teacher unions are the largest donators to school board campaigns giving 21,000 dollars to separate candidates ("Teacher union," 2007). Due to the growing influence of teacher unions, many school board members feel obligated to respond to the requests of the unions since they backed their campaigns. On a board that potentially has some members who are union supporters and some who are unaffiliated, it is clear to see how conflict can arise. However, this can only account for specific examples of board fracturing and even more so in states where groups like teacher unions are stronger. This does not give a comprehensive reason for why school boards fracture in districts like KCMO where teacher unions do not play as important of a role. In addition, what this reasoning still lacks is the influence of the broader community on the school board, it only addresses organized interests. What this concept of a shift from trustee to delegate leaves out is the impact communities have on what type of delegation the board develops into. Different types of communities, especially those that are different economically or ethnically, may shape the type of interest groups and constituencies that the board focuses on. In fact, a board role shift from trustee to delegate helps support the hypothesis of this study even further because if a school board is a delegate in a broader community that is divided, then the board will be stifled. That is why it is important to investigate the relationship between the broader community and the school board.

Another reason for a fractured school board is provided by Jacqueline Danzberger (1995) by explaining that due to reasons related to school board restructuring and formation in the past, boards have become ineffective. She goes on to explain that a push for diversity within school boards in the 1960s created cultural diversity as well, which would help explain why the board became fractured, because of this cultural divide (Danzberger 1995). Deborah Land (2002) also suggests that this may be the reasons school boards are so fractured. She believes that the school

board becomes divided because of "changes in election procedures and greater diversity" (Land, 2002, p. 255) within school boards. It seems to be especially true in urban districts where the need to help improve minority students may, within a school board member's mentality, morally outweigh the need to improve all students (Land, 2002). This historical perspective on board development actually helps support the hypothesis of this study. Cultural diversity itself may not be the root cause of fracturing boards, otherwise culturally homogenous school districts would all have school boards practicing unified governance, which is not the case. In addition, the ability to develop a culturally homogenous school district is both improbable and illegal. However, this historical perspective on school board development shows that diversity may not be the problem, but it brings previously silenced interests forward, helping to exacerbate problems in communities that have greater challenges socially and economically. That is why analyzing the relationship between the broader community and the school board is so important. Narrowing the issue of a fractured school board to only one thing, like cultural diversity, over-simplifies the problem and leaves out the impact the individual broader community has on the school board. This study will expand on the relationship between the broader community and the school board beyond one defining issue.

Some researchers believe that a fractured school board comes from a politically fractured society and not necessarily a culturally fractured one (Alsbury, 2008; Danzberger, 1994; Kowalski, 2006; Land, 2002). These researchers would say that because society is fractured politically, it causes a fracture within a school board. This seems to be ever present in today's political world, which is as polarized as it has ever been. They believe that because of interest groups and advocacy coalitions, school board members become polarized politically by pandering to these specific interests (Alsbury, 2008). The issue with this explanation is the

amount of interest in school board elections. Only around 10-15% of the electorate votes in the

school board elections (Land, 2002). However, this does not necessarily rule out societal

political polarization as the cause. Simply because members of society do not vote in elections

does not mean that they do not become politically vocal, silence does not mean consent in a

representative democracy (Arblaster, 1994). This division in politics could very well be the

reason school boards are so fractured themselves, especially as they move away from the role of

trusteeship to representation (delegate) (Danzberger, 1994; Land, 2002). Yet again though,

while this explanation scratches the surface of the community's impact, it leaves out what

Danzberger and Land tried to account for, cultural diversity. Furthermore, this would not

explain why a school board would function in a suburb with political divide, versus an inner city

with political, cultural and economic divide. Without looking at the community's impact as a

whole, the research can only give a piecemeal explanation.

Insight on Board-Community Connections from Socio-political Research

Since so little educational literature discusses the impact of community effects on school

board fracturing, it may be prudent to consider analyzing socio-political research. This will help

fill in the gap in the research that exists when considering the community's influence. Because

school boards are a form of representative democracy, as defined by Anthony Arblaster (1994),

this study can take scenarios and literature related to other forms of representative democracy

such as literature about the United States government. This can give an idea as to why

governments of nations become fractured and ineffective. Generalizing this to education may

lend insight as to what causes the fracturing of a school board. Pietro Nivola and David Brady

(2006) offer examples as to why the government of the United States has become so polarized in

their book *Red and Blue Nation? Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*.

Firstly, they analyze the belief that governmental polarization is caused by the society or in this case, the voters. While this would seem logical with the recent political rhetoric, recent evidence actually suggests to the contrary that in fact there is an actual middle ground in political voting in the public (Nivola & Brady, 2006, p. 51). They continue to say:

> In other words, while systematic evidence indicates that American politics as conducted by the political class is increasingly polarized, the evidence also suggests that this development is not simply a reflection of an increasingly polarized electorate. (p. 51)

This can have serious implications for this study. What Nivola & Brady (2006) are suggesting is that research is showing that even though the United States government is polarized, it is not evident in the voting patterns of the electorate. If these conclusions are generalized to this study, in theory, voting patterns of the general public would not predict a fractured board just as they do not predict a fractured government.

They do, however, offer up several other solutions. While many would more than likely not relate to educational governance (religion, etc.) there are some suggestions that could generalize well in an educational setting. One such example is their reaction to the idea that polarization is caused by redrawing district voting lines. The authors suggest that polarization is not a reflection of redrawing these lines but rather a product of more serious developments in political discourse (Nivola & Brady, 2006). This would suggest that one reason for polarization is actually the issues at hand. For education this would mean that perhaps the reason school boards are so fractured is due to the evolving developments in education. Issues like NCLB and high stakes testing may very well be driving wedges between school board members. This would suggest that the issue lies within in a more philosophical tone than a superficial one. Taking this theory into consideration would suggest that school boards will fracture more and more as education rapidly changes and since education is always changing it would be relevant to suggest that school boards can be nothing but fractured. While this theory provides a face-

value analysis of problems, it does not get into the root of the system. Would all educational issues drive wedges between school board members? Would some be more contentious than others and to what degree? This theory disregards the impact of the community on the school board which, for the purposes of this study, is believed to be the missing link.

In further exploring socio-political research, it is important to consider literature on how other governmental situations have been affected by their communities in order to begin linking governance to community. For example, Edward C Banfield (1958) discusses an Italian community with a dysfunctional government in *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. Because of the overall distrust of government and community behavior that Banfield (1958, p. 83) defines as "amoral familist", the community has effectively negated functioning government. A community filled with "amoral familist" will focus on whatever benefits the family in place of what benefits the community as a whole. This behavior, coupled with intense poverty and distrust of the government, had consequently shut down the effectiveness of the government in Montegrano in the 1950's. This shows a strong connection between the community and the governing powers of that community that can be paralleled to school boards, and specifically the school board of KCMO. While the KCMO community does not fall into the "amoral familist" category, there are still some strong community factors that could have influenced the way government functions (i.e. poverty, cultural shifts, political changes, etc.) That is where this research study comes in. By correlating community voting patterns with school board decisions, this study can see if the shifts in the community have had an impact on a governing body such as a school board.

It can be hypothesized that once the community of Kansas City, Missouri changed with purposeful racial segregation in the second half of the 1900's, so did the belief and trust in the

current government. As history shows, Kansas City, Missouri went through a drastic change in the late 1950's. With the school board, real estate companies, and federal government purposefully segregating the black community, KCMO went through a drastic culture and economic change (Gotham, 2014). The number of impoverished families increased, and racial segregation began to flourish, however the government did not change with the environment. According to Huntington (1968) "social and economic changes necessarily disrupt traditional social and political grouping and undermine loyalty to traditional authorities (p. 36)." Furthermore, it is important to note that the absence of this trust in government, as seen also in Montegrano, creates a huge barrier to creating functioning political institutions such as school boards (Huntington, 1968, p. 28). This could very well be one of the issues facing the KCMO school board and why, when compared to Blue Valley, there seems to be more dysfunction. Because the community of KCMO underwent such a drastic change, the governing school board was unable to continue being effective.

As stated before, school boards are a well institutionalized, bureaucratic system that have structurally changed very little in the past century (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Kirst, 1994; Weber, 2003). This may help explain some of the criticisms with the school board while also providing a link to the community. Communities that undergo drastic changes socially or economically and have political institutions that cannot keep up, become unstable (Huntington, 1968). This theory was developed within countries that have undergone modernization trends but do not have political institutions that modernize as well. Fortunately, it can be paralleled to what goes on with the school board. As KCMO underwent a drastic racial change throughout the late 1900's (Gotham, 2014), the institutionalized and bureaucratic system of school boards stayed the same.

There is a possibility that an inherent dysfunction and instability in government that matches this change in the community exists. This study hypothesizes that by explaining voting patterns in KCMO, they will show an instability in voter decisions that will also be correlated with the instability in the school board, linking the community's change with that of the school board's effectiveness. This should also be echoed in the community of Blue Valley where a drastic change did not occur, and greater stability will be shown between community and school board.

While some studies have offered explanations as to why school boards are fractured, there are still several limitations that have been presented in recent research and will limit future research as well. One of those limitations is the simple fact that so little research has been conducted on school boards. Specifically, very little research has been conducted in response to the relationships between school board members, constituencies, interest groups, and teacher unions (Danzberger, 1995). There are several studies that can show how school boards can be effective and what indicators show ineffectiveness (Ainley and McKenzie, 2000; Danzberger, 1994; Johnson, 2012; Kowalski, 2006; Land, 2002; Ziebarth, 1999). Within each of the studies there is a clear and concise explanation of the indicators of a failing board. However, when considering each of them, including a fractured board, no research study can give an empirical, definitive, and solitary reason as to why the boards become so fractured. Each of the explanations also leaves out the vital impact the community has on the school board. Another limitation is the ability to link correlations in outside factors with the cause of school board fracturing. Take for example what this study seeks to find, a correlation between community divisiveness and school board fracturing. It would be impossible even if this study controlled for other factors, like changes in educational landscape, for there to be an absolute causality link

between community and school board fracturing. For this reason alone, this study only seeks to

find a correlational link between school boards and the community's cohesion. To help expand

on that correlation and connection between community and school board, sociological literature

on organizations and their connectedness with the community must be reviewed.

Insight on Board-Community Connections from Sociological Research

In order to properly understand the link between the school board and its community, it is

vital that literature on the sociological impact of organizations be reviewed. This study will not

be able to effectively identify a link between voting patterns and school board decisions without

this literature. When examining this topic from a sociological standpoint on organizations, it is

important to begin with defining what type of organization the school board is. While there may

be many definitions to describe what exact type of organization the school board is, for the

purpose of this study school boards will be focused on as an integral part of the educational

bureaucracy. It is Max Weber that gives us a definition of bureaucracy as being a system of

management controlled by hierarchical structure that focuses on the technical aspect of the

system it controls whether it be in promotion or in candidate selection (Weber, 2003). School

board fits well within this definition and within the bureaucracy of education because they

epitomize the hierarchical structure. School boards focus on the technical aspects of hiring as

well as promotion and recognize that employees must be qualified to be a part of the structure of

their organization. The system of education is also "personally free and subject to authority only

with respect to their impersonal official obligations" (Weber, 2003, p.19) and school boards fit

right in there. So, for the purpose of narrowing down the sociological literature to be reviewed,

school boards will be considered an integral part of the bureaucracy of education and the two are

in fact indistinguishable. Since school boards are a part of the bureaucracy of education, this

also means that they are a part of its benefits and shortcomings. Even though bureaucracy is arguably the most entrenched system of organizational structure and control, it also has its weaknesses that affect the way school boards function as well. Focusing specifically on the fracturing of the board, as explained earlier, can the literature shed some light on how the community can affect the cohesion of a board of education?

One place to begin is looking at how outside forces can play a strong influence in the way bureaucracies function. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) start by explaining how outside influences of an organization can actually shape the way an organization is structured and controlled. What these researchers say is that school board actions can be shaped by the influences of the organizations and constituencies outside of the system the school board governs. This would help support this research study by stating that the community itself as an organization would impact the school board. The community's cohesion should have an impact, according to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) on the cohesion of the school board simply by being an outside influence on the bureaucracy. Evidence of this has already been discussed in the way that cultural diversity is believed to impact school boards, as well as political polarization, organized interest groups, etc. The idea that the community is an influencing force on bureaucracies is not new but identifying the extent of the relationship between the broader community and the school board is. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) give this study permission to assume that the community is an outside influence, which leads to the next step of deciding the extent of that influence.

The relationship between community and school board is also supported by the fact that forces outside of education have driven the way education is carried out. Take for example the push for professionalization in education and teacher licensure. The drive for educational professionalization is a strong indicator of influences on bureaucracies (Ritzer, 1975) and how

outside forces can shape them. As the system of education seeks legitimacy and to fall in line with what the community views as professional, the bureaucracy of education changes laws on teacher licensures and educational programs. This strengthens the hypothesis of this study because the impact of these outside forces can be paralleled to a broader community's concerns and influences impacting the way a school board votes and functions.

To further strengthening the relationship between the broader community and the school board, the way school boards have been affected by desegregation movements must be analyzed because such movements have put pressure on the boards. In many cases, during desegregation movements of schools, school boards are being pushed and pulled from many sides; government, teachers, community, etc. so much so that they are losing control over the decisions they are allowed to make (Kirst, 1994, and Frankenberg and Diem, 2013). In Frankenberg and Diem's (2013) article *School Board Leadership and Policymaking in Changing Political Environments*, one can get a strong and clear understanding of how school desegregation movements are a real-life example of the influence boards are getting with regard to their changing roles. According to the article there are several interesting factors when dealing with desegregating schools. In multiple areas, movements to desegregate schools have begun picking up momentum because of the public outcry a lot of times fueled by the media and outspoken community members. Already the power of the outside influences on organizations can be seen. After a push for desegregation has been initiated school boards attempt to make policies to desegregate the schools. However, on multiple occasions the school boards have been found unconstitutional in their efforts to desegregate schools. One of those school districts is Jefferson County Public Schools which has made numerous attempts to appease the movements of desegregation while upholding to the court's rulings as well as appease parents and local white enclaves (Frankenberg

and Diem, 2013). This real-world example of problems school boards face epitomizes the squeezing school boards get from both sides, which renders their decision-making powers ineffective. In the end, the desegregation ends up not occurring and nothing drastically changes with the school districts because these organizations are so institutionalized.

What is also fascinating about these school districts are the "white enclaves" that develop. As movements begin to desegregate, these enclaves push against it because they do not want their prestigious schools being changed (Frankenberg and Diem, 2013). This is a problem because of the way the school boards are elected. Because the school boards are elected on a local basis, the voter turnout is low and the ones that typically tend to vote are in the white enclaves, so they hold all the power and politics. This is how school boards get pushed from top and bottom. The community and media say desegregate, while a select powerful few say no, and along the way the government regulates exactly how you can and cannot. One thing that can be gleamed from the examples in Frankenberg and Diem's (2013) study is that boards that are elected at-large tend to work better with desegregation and minimizing influences of enclaves. This could help support the hypothesis of this study because boards that are elected on a smaller district basis must overcome the individual influence of the districts in the community. When board members are elected by smaller districts, that adds another layer of influences and representation that the board must consider. In this scenario, now each individual district in a community's election has representation which theoretically increases the amount of issues the board must face.

To further the connection between the broader community and the school board through the idea that the community is an outside influence and the school board is a bureaucracy, it is important to explain different elements that may affect and strengthen that relationship. There

comes a point where a bureaucracy, in an attempt to continue being legitimate, will take on roles and practices that may further the survival of the organization even at the cost of efficiency (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983 and Meyer and Rowan, 1977). While doing this, bureaucracies will model outside organizations and bend to outside influences because of the power they hold over a bureaucracy's search for legitimacy (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). A school board is no different than any other bureaucracy these sociologists discuss.

In an attempt to continue being legitimate, the school boards have begun focusing more on the business side of the school districts rather than the education as discussed earlier. What is also being seen is that school boards are moving to a more reactive role rather than being active policy creators. School boards are being forced to react to what state governments are mandating and this is shifting their role (Todras 1993). Because the state and federal governments have begun to take control of the education side away from school boards, to seek legitimacy and survive, boards have begun to focus on the business role. However, as research shows, this tends to be one of the criticisms of the school board because it affects efficiency (Danzberger, 1994, and Todras, 1993). Even though it is clear that the current change in the role of the school board is not the more productive one, the school board continues to go down this path because of the powerful influences of outside controls. This helps support the theory of this study because it builds on the potential connection between the community, an outside influencer, and the school board, a bureaucracy.

Another interesting influence on school boards that parallels the effects of the state and federal government's influence is the change in who is making policy. As Michael Kirst (1994) explains in the article *A Changing Context Means School Board Reform*, as the school board has evolved so have the ones in control of the educational policy at the national level. Where once

educators and people vested in education made the policy decisions and held the most influence, now the legislators, businesses, and governors have taken over control. Because educators are no longer in control of the educational policy, we are seeing a situation where the control of that role is being taken out of the hands of the school boards. This is further evidence that organizations are only as secure and stable as their outside influences and are at the mercy of external control (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). What this has caused in education are movements like Common Core and No Child Left Behind that completely strip the power from the school boards over the creation of curriculum and educational policy. Not only do school boards begin focusing on business as a means of legitimacy but they also have changed to becoming more reactive. School boards no longer take the role of advocates of their communities in the creation of curriculum and educational policy, but rather they now react to what is forced upon them by national and state level governments according to these authors.

This review of sociological literature helps to support the hypothesis of this study by helping to build a connection between the broader community and the school board. What the sociological research proposes is that outside influences on education, which come in many forms, have a strong impact on the way a school board functions and can, in many cases, actually control the board itself. The next step is to identify the extent to which the community's influence plays a significant role, as an outside factor, on shaping the board's cohesion and decision making.

Summary

School boards of education continue to be the preferred form of governance for most school districts even despite their shortcomings. Many will say this is because of the grammar of schooling and that something that has become so institutionalized will always be present (Tyack

and Cuban, 1995). Because of that, it seems impossible to prove which form of governance would be the best for education. Rather, it would be of greater impact to discuss why school boards are failing and what causes that failure. It is within this reasoning that lies the purpose of this study, which is to discover the reasons a school board loses its cohesion. Through reviewing the literature and looking at data, it is this researcher's belief that school board cohesion is correlated with community cohesion and that when a community is divided, so too will the school board be.

After reviewing the available literature, there is a strong body of literature that supports several theories as to which form of educational governance is the best for education in certain situations. However, no researcher has been able to prove, nor potentially will ever be able to prove, which form of governance is better for education. Because of this, researchers focus on the faults with the school board, the main form of educational governance. Within these faults, researchers have found that school boards tend to be very divided and split on their decision making, which inhibits the board's efficacy. There is, however, a gap in the literature here. What can be seen is the fault in the board, what has not been determined is the reason for this fault. Researchers have yet to give empirical evidence as to why school boards become so divided, and that is where this study comes in. In each example given as to the reason of the divisiveness of a board, elements of the community's impact are left out. This study seeks to show that the community has a strong impact on the cohesion of the school board and ignoring this impact, as current research does, limits the efficacy of any solution presented. Through looking at sociological literature, it can be determined that outside factors have a great influence on the bureaucracy of education. Because outside influence will sometimes shape the

bureaucracy, community cohesion being an outside factor should also greatly shape the way a school board functions.

      While this study may have larger implications, the most important impact will be on how education views its governance and continues it. Through understanding issues, society gains a stronger understanding of how to improve the process. In understanding reasons why a school board fails, the field of education can thereby begin to improve its governance.

Chapter III: Methods

This study examines the connection between the level of community cohesion and the level of school board cohesion. The purpose of this study is to fill in the gap found in the overall literature of school boards when considering the impact of the community. Specifically, this research will help discover some of the possible underlying reasons as to why a school board fails. In order to do this, research will be analyzed from several different sources to ascertain the possible connection.

Background of Boards Chosen

Before breaking down the method of data gathering and analysis, it is important to understand the context within which these school boards are situated. Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMO) is the first of the two districts to analyze. KCMO is an inner-city school district in the greater Kansas City Metro area. In 2015 KCMO had a student population of 14,228. 57 percent were Black, 28.4 percent were Hispanic, and 8.9 percent were White. Also, in 2015, KCMO had a free and reduced percentage of 65.4. The dropout rate was 9.8 percent which was 7 percentage points above the state of Missouri's average and the 4-year college attendance rate was 28.4 percent, which was 8 percentage points below the state average (Missouri Department of Education, 2015). All of this shows that KCMO is a school district facing adversity. One assumption this study makes is that the school board in KCMO is going to have an impact on its divisiveness because of the diverse demographics of its district. The extent to which the community plays a part in this, however, is still yet to be quantified and shown in a meaningful way. This is the reason that a secondary school district was chosen for analysis, because it is necessary to see a comparison with a school district that is more affluent. In an

attempt to compare the relationship between a community and a school board in different affluence, Blue Valley School District, was chosen.

Blue Valley School District is situated in the suburbs of Kansas. Total enrollment for the district in 2012-2013 was 22,215 students. Among those students, 77.37 percent were White, 3.22 percent were Black, 4.94 percent were Hispanic, and 14.48 percent were defined as other. In comparison to the 65.4 percent free and reduced in KCMO, only 8.42 percent are free and reduced in Blue Valley. In 2013 the district had a dropout rate of .5 percent which was 1 percentage point below that of the state of Kansas. When looking at the 2012 graduates, no high school in Blue Valley had a percentage lower than 89 of students enrolled in higher education as defined by the state within 16 months of graduation (Kansas State Department of Education, 2013). What this shows is that when considering at-risk students and issues that school districts must address, Blue Valley is at an advantage. It is because of this advantage that Blue Valley was chosen. Since the purpose of this study is to help define the relationship between the school board and the broader community, districts in different community's had to be chosen. To do that, a school board of similar design, in a geographically similar area, with a different level of community affluence was chosen. Theoretically, if the level of correlation between community cohesion and school board decision making is the same between both districts, this study can make the assumption that the community of a school board has a strong effect on its cohesion regardless of community affluence. If there is a difference between the influences the community has on the school board between the two different communities, then obviously community affluence will play a role. The point of this study is not to rule out demographics, but rather to accept the assumption that KCMO will be more divisive because of its

demographics and with that knowledge, still show the impact of the community. Along these same lines, it is important to understand the community's make-up as well.

The communities of both Blue Valley and KCMO are vastly different as well, which helps support the use of Blue Valley as a control. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, Blue Valley's total population was 110,077, compared to KCMO which has 238,278. Blue Valley also has a mean household income of 130,967 dollars in comparison to KCMO which sits at 51,598 dollars. This shows the extreme difference in economics between KCMO and Blue Valley, and just exactly how economically disadvantaged KCMO is. Furthermore, the unemployment rate of KCMO is slightly above 7 percent while Blue Valley sits slightly above 2 percent (Proximity 2015). This is what makes Blue Valley an ideal control, because if similar correlations exist between the school board and community in Blue Valley as they do in KCMO, this means those factors play less of a strategic role. Another good reason is the demographic make-up of the communities. In Blue Valley 86.5 percent of the community is White, 2.8 percent Hispanic, and 2.5 percent African American. KCMO has a population of 45.2 percent White, 14 percent Hispanic, and 36.1 percent Black (Proximity 2015). What this helps mitigate is the demographic division within the community. Since Blue Valley is a much more cohesive community demographically, if the same correlations exist between the board and community cohesion as they do in KCMO, which has a much more diverse demographic, than this study can ascertain the impact the community has.

Finally, the remaining elements that needs to be given context are the school boards themselves. When comparing the two boards, the structural differences between them are minimal enough that they play little to no part. The only difference between the two boards logistically are the number of members and the number of meetings held by each board. The

way the school boards conduct business are virtually identical. Blue Valley school board has 7 members, which is typical for a Kansas school board, and holds meetings once a month, which is also very typical for a Kansas school board. KCMO school board is a board of 9 members and holds meetings twice a month. Due to this and the fact that KCMO has been around longer than Blue Valley, the sample size from the KCMO school board is much larger. Occasionally both school boards will hold special meetings which must be decided on ahead of time before they are held, the minutes from these meetings were also considered when analyzing the research.

Process for Data Gathering

The process by which the information was gathered for this study included both field research and data compilation, coding, and analysis. First, school board minutes from the two separate districts, Blue Valley and Kansas City Missouri, were examined to see the extent to which the respective school boards are divided in their decision-making process. The extent to which a board is divided will be determined by the amount of split decisions found in past board minutes. Both school boards have 4 options of voting: yes, no, abstention, and absence. Abstention is defined, in this context, as a board member voluntarily choosing not to vote yes or no. Absence is defined as a board member not being present for the vote. In order to accurately portray the division of the board, this study had to take into account the split between yes and no votes and then look at applying a quantitative consequence for board members abstaining or being absent. These data were then be compared with a secondary source that will give information on the community within which a school board governs.

To quantify the level of community cohesion, this study investigated the public voting records of a community. It is the assumption of this researcher that a community's voting records give insight into one level of cohesiveness in a community. Since a school board is an

enactment of a representative democracy, then the community's voting patterns in a similar

representative democracy should show a comparable measure of cohesion. The community in

which Blue Valley and Kansas City Missouri schools reside is where the voter information came

from. For obvious reasons, public voting is never unanimous and is at a much larger scale than

school board voting. This information will need to be looked at in a way that gives both sets of

data a comparable quantitative measure. After both sets of information are gathered, then the

comparison will begin to see whether the level to which a community is cohesive correlates with

the divisiveness of a school board.

Comparing these two sets of data together has never been done and is what will provide

insight into the question of this research study. Analyzing this data should help provide a greater

analysis into why school boards become so divided. While this study does not seek to give a

definitive answer into why school boards succeed or fail, the research should provide clarity into

the impact a community has on a school board.

In order to gather the data for the research, two separate sources had to be sought out,

board minutes and voting results from elections. In order to find the first source of data, the

board minutes, both school boards were contacted, and the custodians of records were

communicated with. It was through the custodian of records that access was granted to gather

the research. In both Blue Valley and KCMO the custodian of records required documentation

with intent of research and purpose of seeking the specific information. Blue Valley has board

minutes dating back to the 1970's, while KCMO has board minutes dating back to the late

1800's. For the purpose of this study, information was gathered from the beginning of the Blue

Valley records and in KCMO, research went back to the 1950's to get a representative and

Table 1: Dates of Data Collected

	BVSD	OP	KCMO – Board	KCMO - Community
1948				X
1949			Jan	
1950			Jan, Apr, June	
1951				X
1952				X
1954			Sept	
1955				X
1956				X
1959			July, Aug	X
1960			Jan, July, Sept	X
1961	Sept			
1964			Jan, July, Sept	X
1965	Sept	X	Jan, July, Sept	
1966	Jan, July, Sept			
1967	Jan, July, Sept			
1968	Jan, July, Sept	X		X
1969	Jan, July, Sept	X		
1970	Jan, July, Sept	X	Jan, July, Sept	
1971	Jan, July, Sept		May, June,	
1972	Jan, July, Sept			X

	BVSD	OP	KCMO – Board	KCMO - Community
1973	Jan, July, Sept			
1974	Jan, July, Sept	X		
1975	Jan, July, Sept	X	Sept, Oct	
1976	Jan, July, Sept	X		X
1977	Jan, July, Sept		Sept,	
1978	Jan, July, Sept			
1979	Jan, July, Sept			
1980		X	Jan, July, Sept	X
1981	Jan, July, Sept	X		
1982	Jan, July, Sept			
1983	Jan, July, Sept			
1984	Jan	X		X
1985		X	Jan, July, Sept	
1986	Jan, July, Sept	X		
1987				
1988				X
1989	Jan, July, Sept			
1990	Jan, July, Sept	X	Jan, July, Sept	
1991	Jan, July, Sept	X	Jan, July, Sept	
1992				X
1993				
1994			July, Sept,	

	BVSD	OP	KCMO – Board	KCMO - Community
1995	Jan, July, Sept	X	Jan, Mar	
1996	Jan, July, Sept	X		X
1997	Jan			
1999	July, Sept	X		
2000	Jan, July, Sept	X		X
2001	Jan, July, Sept		Jan, July, Sept	
2002	Jan			
2004		X		
2005		X		
2009		X		

manageable sample. Table 1 shows the specific months that data was gathered for each year in the districts and the years the voting data was collected from the communities.

In each of the decades, years were selected from the beginning, middle, and end. Within each year, three key months were decided where significant events would be taking place, in order to give a comparable and manageable data set. January was chosen because it was the beginning of the calendar year. July was the second month chosen because it is the beginning of the fiscal year for a school district. September was the last month chosen because it would typically be the first board meeting after the start of the school year. However, in some cases, the availability of the information is what dictated the data gathered. In KCMO's records, the 1970's were very sporadic in their data, and so availability of information determined what years were scanned.

This was also not surprising because it was around this time period that the most division was seen in the board. This study tried to control as much as possible for the sporadic nature of the data while still getting a representative sample.

Once the board minutes were scanned, then the coding process began. The data was uploaded to Excel and the different topics of the board's voting were assigned a code for easier access and comparability. The codes were based on logical themes that ran throughout the different voting topics. For example, several votes were taken by the KCMO school board dealing with topics such as "Personnel appointment", "Library Personnel Appointment", "Motion to accept resignation", and "Motion to rescind the employment of…". When looking at these types of voting topics, it was logical to place them under one, overarching category, "Personnel". This way, any topic that the board made a decision on dealing with "Personnel" would fit under that code. This would allow for analysis of similar themes (codes) between both KCMO and BVSD. The coding system is explained in more detail in Table 2 below:

Table 2: List of Coded Topics

Code Number	Code Topic	Code Description
1	Personnel	Voting on adding or removing employees, or modifying any employees contract status within the district
2	Construction	Voting on physical building changes or changes in any contract for construction in the district
3	Budget	Voting on ratifying or adjusting the district budget
4	Bonds	Voting on creating or maintaining bonds
5	Board Elections/Appointments	Voting on electing members to the school board
6	Salary	Voting on employee salaries
7	Executive Session	Voting on entering executive session or continuing executive session

8	Consent Agenda and Policies	Voting on passing the consent agenda or changing any board policy
9	Dates	Voting on setting dates for board meetings
10	Contracts	Voting on ratifying employee contracts
11	Legal	Voting on discussion the board had on legal matters
12	Insurance	Voting on policies and payments for insurance
13	Library	Voting on spending for libraries, professional development for librarians, or library budget expenditures

KCMO required a larger coding system because the range of topics they covered were greater than that of BVSD. Each vote that took place during the board meeting has a short synopsis in Excel followed by how the board voted. The content of the vote is important because typically a board will vote differently depending on the topic. For example, if the board is voting on adjourning the meeting, almost every time these votes are unanimous. However, if a board is voting on topics similar to ratification of the teaching contract, this could be a divisive vote. This is important in the analysis because it may be necessary to reevaluate those votes that are naturally unanimous and see if further comparisons or conclusions can be drawn. Furthermore, understanding the topics with which a school board disagrees on, lends insight into the functionality of a board. Taking these codes and comparing them to a historical analysis of the community can also strengthen the research behind the relationship of the community and the school board.

The second step of the process was to gather the information on the community within which the school boards are located. The difficulty with this is how expansive these two districts have become over the years. For example, Blue Valley started as a district in the city of Overland Park and has grown to include cities such as Olathe, Leawood, Shawnee, and Aubrey.

This makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly what community to consider when looking at cohesiveness. For this purpose, one city was chosen for Blue Valley as well as for KCMO that contains the largest portion of their students and has been a part of their district since its inception. This city for Blue Valley is Overland Park and for KCMO that would be Kansas City. Much of the reason one city was chosen for each district is because of the way the voting records are stored. For each election the records are categorized by the city, with the exception of the elections dealing directly with the schools. The elections dealing directly with the school districts are organized by the school district. Each of the cities that have been chosen contain records dating back to the records chosen for the school board minutes. This allows for a more accurate analysis between the community and the school board. The voting data was found in election offices located in each of the corresponding cities. Since they are public records, they are available to anyone with an appointment and are kept as paper copies. Just like the board voting data, the community voting data was uploaded into Excel where the context of the vote is explained as well as the outcome. This will take place for any vote that occurs in the years corresponding with the school board records. However, because of the limited data points in earlier years, such as the 1950s in KCMO, the data will be truncated in a way to allow for validity in the analysis. Since this study needs a comprehensive look at the cohesiveness of the community, it is necessary to look at every vote taken within the years chosen, so every vote was uploaded into the analysis.

Assumptions of Research

Since this study seeks to discover if there is a connection between the cohesiveness of the community and the cohesiveness of a school board, the analysis of the data will be looking to find the connection. The analysis of the data will be done through grounded theory (Strauss and

Corbin, 1994) and will focus on the correlations between the community's data and the school board's data. Each year the school board's decisions will be correlated with the community's decisions to see if, as the community became more divisive in their voting, the school board did so as well. In order to do that comparison reasonably, this research study had to make some assumptions.

The first assumption is that every citizen that wanted to vote, in fact, reported to vote. As stated before, voter turnout is an issue with the school board, however it is beyond the scope of this research study to take into account voter turnout. The second assumption is that having only one candidate will unfairly skew the data and show unanimity in the community voting data. In these instances, the data points were removed from comparison. These data points would have more of an impact on a study about the effectiveness of the representative process, rather than community cohesion. The third assumption is that not only is a board divisive because of disagreement between yes and no, but abstentions and absences should play a role in categorizing the extent to which a board is divisive. However, abstention and absences should not count equal to that of a yes or no vote because there are far too many outside factors that could affect a board member abstaining or being absent (i.e. illness, conflict of interest, taking a break). Abstentions and absences only have a secondary effect on division, meaning it will only affect a Division Measure if the yes and no votes are the same. The fourth assumption this study makes is the comparability between community and school board voting patterns.

The way this will be done statistically is to compare the two data sets through the coefficient of variation (CV). The coefficient of variation is defined as the "ratio of the standard deviation to the mean, and it is a useful statistic for comparing the degree of variation from one data series to another, even if the means are drastically different from one another (Investopedia,

2018)." To begin the comparison, the variations between the choices was calculated. For the school districts, this was the variation between yes votes and no votes. For the community, the variation of the number of votes each candidate received was calculated. From this point, an average was calculated from the proportions. In the school board context this will always be yes and no (.5), however, in the community context this will vary depending on the number of candidates. This step was crucial in allowing a comparison between the two sets of data. The next step was to calculate the variance between the proportions and then the standard deviation of that variance. This alone gives usable data to make comparison, however it still does not give the size of the variance and allow a comparison between the multiple sets of data. Finally, the coefficient of variance was calculated by dividing the standard deviation by the average to create a comparative quantifiable result across the data sets. This number was then multiplied by 100 in order to give what this study calls, the "Division Measure". For the community, the division measure was divided by the amount of candidates to make it comparable across multiple different election types. A sampling of this process is found below:

Year	RACE			Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3
1972	Governor			73014	70217	350
			Proportions			
				0.509	0.489041029	0.002437648

Average	Variance	STD Dev	CV	Division Measure	
0.333	0.0822	0.287	86.019	28.673	

The exact same process was used to calculate the impact of the abstentions and absences. The proportions of abstentions and absences was calculated based on the total number of votes possible. So, if one board member was absent, this meant that the proportion of that absence vote was 1/6 or .1667. From there, the sum of the proportions was calculated, because abstentions and absences are considered equal in their impact. Then an average was calculated

taking a full vote into consideration, so the average would be calculated between 1.0 and the sum of the proportions. Finally, the standard deviation and the coefficient of variance were calculated. This time, however, the coefficient of variance was not multiplied by 100 to get the Division Measure, instead the direct CV was applied to the already present Division Measure in order to delineate between a similar board decision with absences and abstentions playing a part. An example of this can be found below:

Date	Code	Voting Topic	Ayes	Noes	Abstention	Absent
1/1/49	1	Personnel appointment	5	0	0	1

Prop of Absen	Abst	Sum of Prop		Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	CV		Division Measurement
0.000	0.167	0.167	1.000	0.583	0.3472	0.589	101.02	1.010	142.43

In order to have a more comprehensive and accurate comparison, the school boards needed to be compared year by year with the community. This research study makes a fifth assumption in order to do this. The assumption is that years surrounding missing raw data are comparable to the available data. Years that were missing in either data sets were created using averages from surrounding years. For example, since the 1970s were missing several raw data samples in KCMO (due to them being lost by the KCMO school district), the available raw data was used to create an average and fill in the missing years.

Historical Analysis

After the initial analysis has been completed on the level of correlation between school board and community, a further evaluation will be completed on the historical context within

which the community and the school board voted. It will be important to add historical context to the fluctuation of divisiveness in both the school district and community.

Research into historical events that occurred within the communities will be cross-referenced in order to give further context to the community. The purpose of cross-referencing historical events with the data is to allow a deeper connection to be drawn between the community and the school board. If events that occur within the community seem to occur within the school district, or have impacts on the school district, that will help to strengthen the hypothesis of this study. The historical contexts of the community also define the state of the community. In order to ascertain the level of impact the affluence of a community has on the results, the historical data is needed to define the level of affluence in the community.

Several events have occurred historically within these communities that may have shaped the cohesion of the community. Since the 1950's, a lot has changed in an inner-city area like Kansas City, including most prominent, desegregation movements. Including these historical events will help give further insight into the possible reason for the division in a community. Simply looking at voting records gives a strong quantitative comparison to the community cohesion versus school board cohesion. However, a slight qualitative approach may still be necessary to determine, if correlations exist, whether they are further substantiated by events within the community. To completely ignore such divisive events as desegregation movements in school districts would be doing a disservice to the research. Leaving out the historical context might lesson the validity of the results and so for the purpose of this study, major historical events will be cross-referenced with the records of the communities voting patterns and school board decisions. Doing this, in effect, will create a timeline of events that shows how the school

board and community have changed in their cohesion over time and what historical events might have influenced these changes.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to seek an answer to the question, is community cohesion correlated with school board cohesion? It is the hypothesis of this research study that community cohesion, as defined by voting trends, is positively correlated with school board cohesion, as defined by school board decision votes. As a community becomes more divided in their voting trends, a school board will have more decisions that lack unanimity. This hypothesis will not only be supported by quantitative data but will also use historical events to parallel the data and give further insight into the division of the community. Theoretically, historical events that have big impacts on the community should coincide with division in the community as well as division on the school board.

In order to help support the hypothesis of this research, data will be collected from two sources. The community and school board of Blue Valley School District in Kansas as well as the community and school board of KCMO in Missouri. Voting records from the community are collected from the election board of each district's county. School board decisions are collected from the minutes of the board meetings which are found in the records of the district office. These are then analyzed to find any correlation between the level of division of the community and the level of division on the school board. This is then cross-referenced with historical events in the community to add further context to the division found in either community or school board. Using two school districts so unlike in demographics will allow this study to not only explore the correlation between a community's voting pattern and the school board's decision, but to also see the impact of demographics on a community and its board.

As this study seeks to find a correlation between community cohesion and school board cohesion it is important to note the impact the results could have. Finding that community cohesion may in some way influence the way a board behaves can help further understanding of board and community relations. Furthermore, the greatest impact that the results of this research can have is on the amount of literature on the topic of school boards. Since school boards have such little research on them, as stated before, this research study will expand the literature and fill gaps. This study seeks to fill in the specific gap in school board literature that deals with reasons for school board failings. Expanding the research on this topic can help to expand the understanding of the board and perhaps even improve upon it.

Chapter IV: Results

Once again, this study seeks to fill the missing gap in literature that connects the community to the school board that serves it. So far, relevant literature has been discussed that elaborates the problems a school board can have, as well as potential causes and solutions for those problems. Each one of those solutions has historically left out a key component, the connection between the community and the school board. Those solutions dealt entirely with the school board and have not addressed the community at all. It is the belief of this study that there is a correlation between the community and the school board. By comparing voting patterns in a community with the decisions of a school board in that community, one will see the relationship of influence the community has on the school board. The more divided a community is, the more divided a school board will be.

This study found that there is a connection between the community and the school board. By looking at KCMO, we see a positive correlation between the community voting patterns and the school board voting patterns. This is shown by comparing the agreement measure of both the community and the school board as measured by the coefficient of variance (CV). Furthermore, the significance of community conditions plays a large role. The relevance of community impact on board function is greater and thus more visible under more disadvantaged community conditions (e.g., those in KCMO). This is insightful because research on boards and programs for board improvements address remedies for board dysfunction within disadvantaged communities. However, the research and programs for improvement do not address the community within which the board governs. There is a fundamental missing link between the community and the school board that this study will show. By comparing a timeline of historical

events, the data gathered, and additional outside resources, this chapter will present findings that support this insight.

In order to make the historical connection between the school board and the community, three sources were chosen. The first is James Shortridge's (2012) work, *Kansas City and How it Grew 1822-2011*. This resource gave the research study insight into the community of KCMO and the historical events that impacted both the community and the school board. The second source is Peter Moran's (2005) work, *Race, Law, and the Desegregation of Public Schools*. This resource gave important historical context to events dealing directly with the school board from the 1950s until the 2000s. The last source, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2010* by Kevin Gotham (2014) was important in helping give context to both the community and the school board. These three resources help provide the context for the connection being made between the school board and the community.

Analysis of KCMO School Board

This dissertation found that there is a connection between the KCMO school board and the community of KCMO that is strengthened by the community being of less homogenous affluence. Below, this study will expand on this connection by analyzing the KCMO school board's data and historical context. To show the relationship of the community and the school board, voting trends were analyzed using the coefficient of variance (CV), identified in this study as the agreement measure. The KCMO school board will be analyzed first and its data is shown in Figure 1. This figure demonstrates how cohesive the KCMO school board was, over the timespan of the data collected, by showing the average CV. The higher the CV, the more agreeable and cohesive the board was. What is seen in Figure 1 is that the school board in KCMO has two distinct drops in their CV or agreement measure. These drops occur in the mid-

1970s and early 1990s. These periods of declining agreement measure also correlate with what was happening in the community. In the 1970s, KCMO was undergoing an extreme racial change in the make-up of their community as well as the make-up of their school system. The decline in the 90s correlates with the segregation court case that was influencing the school system and the community, defining many board decisions. Making the connection between the community and the school board will rely on how the historical context aligns with the data. This chapter will look in depth at the events that influenced the KCMO community and school board, followed by an analysis of the correlation between the community's and the school board's voting patterns.

The first step in making the connection between the community and the school board is looking at the history of the community and school board in relation to the two time periods of declining agreement measure as shown in Figure 1. In linking the historical context of the community with the declining agreement measure in the school board, this study is able to strengthen the theory that the community has a relationship that influences the school board. In addition, the more disadvantaged the community is, the more the relationship with the school board will be evident. Therefore, building the connection of historical events with the declining agreement measure and highlighting the disadvantages the community faced is key to this study's theory.

The first evident decline in the school board's agreement measure starts in the mid-1960s and continues until the lowest point of the mid-1970s. This dip in the agreement measure during this period aligns with the fact that KCMO was facing racial segregation and economic difficulty within the community and the schools. In the 1950s-60s there was a forced desegregation busing plan occurring to help alleviate the re-segregation of schools (Shortridge, 2012). However, the

school's busing plan could not overcome the community's movement towards re-segregation. During this time period, despite the plan, segregation continued to move forward (Gotham, 2014 and Moran, 2005). Interestingly, even with segregation still being a fact in the community in the 1950s-60s, the graduation rates and schools around the area did not suffer. It wasn't until the 1970s that the racial integration programming began to fade, and bussing stopped being forced (Shortridge, 2012). It was during this time period that the schools began to drastically re-segregate as well as drop in effectiveness.

While the issues with busing were prevalent, the KCMO school district was also facing difficulty with student transfers. This helped to exacerbate the problems with segregation, but also impacted funding in the school district. So many students were transferring that many schools became automatically segregated. Community organizations began to convene and put pressure on the board to make changes to the transfer policies, which were enacted, but were too late to prevent the segregation (Moran, 2005). It is important to note that this movement towards community activism would not stop here at the transfer policy. It was during this period in the 1970s that the community activism truly began to impact the decisions of the board and would continue well into the future. While this level of community involvement obviously shows a direct relationship with the board, it also highlights the basis of this research's theory. As the problems with the school district and community increased, so did the involvement of the community organizations. This type of community organizational involvement will surface many times as the analysis of the historical context of KCMO continues.

Another layer to the already segregate practices of the school board is the effect it had on the curriculum. When schools became largely African American, the school board began to dilute the curriculum (Moran, 2005). Higher level classes that were once offered, like physics,

were replaced by more blue-collar courses such as industrial sanitation. The movement towards a diluted curriculum would go hand in hand with the continual decline of the school district after the forced busing stopped in the 1970s. Furthermore, this specific issue would be addressed later in the 90s, when the school district would make a push towards magnet schools to address the lack in the rigor of the curriculum (Moran, 2005).

It was during the 1970s that the school district would fund a study looking into the segregation issue as well as potential options for resolving the issue. The Havighurst study found obvious issues with the integration plan of the school district and offered many suggestions for fixing the integration problem within the district. Solutions such as staff integration and new buildings were suggested to the board to help remedy the segregation in certain buildings (Moran, 2005). However, the board fought over many issues the Havighurst study proposed, and many of the solutions were never put into place or were not effectively monitored. This dissention is visible within the minutes of the school board. Figure 2 displays the topics that the school board disagreed on during the 1970s timeframe. The data shows that the school board disagreed on several topics that would have connected with the Havighurst study, as well as the other issues the board faced. The concentration of disagreements focused on personnel and consent/policies. At one point, the school board disagrees eight consecutive times on dissolving the school district, as well as tax levy issues. In analyzing these topics, there is a connection between what difficulties the board faced and the changes and influences of the community. This gives context to the declining agreement measure in the board and helps relate it back to what the community was experiencing. This is integral in establishing this research's theory because at the same time the board was facing these issues with the schools, the community was facing similar issues.

One of the largest issues facing the community of KCMO during this timeframe was the re-segregation of the housing market. Due to many racially restrictive covenants in associations, as well discriminatory practices in the loan industry, the real estate market began to dramatically re-segregate in the 1960s (Gotham, 2014; Shortridge, 2012). This probably had one of the most profound impacts on the schools and community because it began to dramatically shift the clientele of the district and community. This shift didn't just impact African American and White communities, the Hispanic community also began to grow in certain areas of KCMO. By 1976, KCMO school district had become one of the most segregated school districts in the country, so much so that the federal government shut off funding because of it (Shortridge, 2012). This shift in KCMO is defined by "edge cities", where the suburbs of surrounding areas began to be havens for fleeing middle- and upper-class families. This led to the eventual racial and economic dividing line of Troost in KCMO. In essence, the street named Troost in KCMO is where a geographical line was drawn between white upper-income families and black or Hispanic lower-income families. This dividing line would define the school district and the city for years to come (Gotham, 2014; Shortridge, 2012).

Another issue that KCMO faced was an issue of finance both in the community and in the school district. A pivotal year for the community of KCMO was 1968 because it is the year that Emery Bird's six-story department store closed in the city center (Shortridge, 2012). Emery Bird was an iconic department store for KCMO, representing economic success. Like many stores in towns, as long as it remained the town could remain. When Emery Bird closed, it signaled an economic downslide for the downtown area. The following years would be defined by political and hotel squabbles over property and development that would contribute to the stunt in inner-city growth.

Furthermore, downtown KCMO was once defined as a national convention location. For several years the Republican National Convention was held in KCMO and much of the business from this and other conventions went to the downtown area. The reputation that KCMO touted as a convention location began to disappear in the 1970s. In addition, the commercial business from any remaining conventions coming to the KCMO area was directed to outside areas. The Republican National Convention, which was held in Kansas City in 1976, suggested the Country Club Plaza (an area outside of downtown proper) as a destination for participants (Shortridge, 2012). The downtown proper area of KCMO for several decades would continue to be described as a place for office buildings, but never as a commercial location.

The public schools faced the same issues when looking towards the community for financing. The last year a bond was passed for KCMO school district was 1969, until the court case forced funding in the late 1980s, causing the district to have severe financial issues (Moran 2005). This is fascinating because many of the issues the school district faced and the community complained about, as discussed earlier, would have been solved by an increase in funding. With an increase in funding, new buildings could have been built in areas that would support integration. Also, with an increase in funding, the school district could have updated dilapidated buildings improving retention of middle- and upper-class students. In fact, the very increase in funding the district needed, which was later forced by the courts, would have helped to improve the dysfunction of the school board, therefore contributing to the increase in the agreement measure (CV) of both the community and the school board in the 1980s. However, the community continued to deny the school board's bond issues in election after election. This event is best explained by author Peter Moran (2005) in his work *Race, Law, and the Desegregation of Public Schools…*

The rejection of the bond proposal by voters in the Westport area is curious because the passage of the measure would have worked in their favor. Approval of the bond issue would have signaled that Manual students would be bused to the Westport area for only a few years while the new high school was built. Nevertheless, a majority of Westport voters, perhaps expressing their general disapproval for recent school district policy choices, rejected the measure in April and May, and were even split in July (p. 99).

This mindset defines the time period of the 1960s-70s for KCMO. Despite what the school district did and how much the community claimed concern with school re-segregation, the community continued to inhibit the district in their efforts to remedy the problem. This mindset and these historical events of the KCMO community are the underpinning of this research study's theory. In KCMO, the community dysfunction influenced the school board so much, that the school board took on a dysfunctional nature.

When looking at Figure 1, Average DM for KCMO School Board, that data shows an additional dip in the school board's agreement measure in the 1990s. The decline in the agreement measure starts in late 1980s and continues into the early 1990s, after which it increases again in the mid-1990s. The importance of this decline is in the low agreement measure lining up with several events happening in the community and in the school district. The 1980s and the 1990s of KCMO would be defined by a landmark court case that would decide two issues; if the school district had been committing segregative actions and how the school board would best remedy that segregation. *Missouri v. Jenkins* began in 1977 and continued for 18 years, eventually involving the United States Supreme Court for its final iteration in 1995. Judge Clark was the presiding judge of the court case at the state level. For the majority of the case, he would have the greatest impact on the course of the litigation. Judge Clark's decision in 1984 confirmed that the school district "had acted with segregative intent" (Moran, 2005). This decision worked both against the school district and for the school district. On one hand, the court blamed the district for the segregation, giving it a negative reputation.

Figure 1: Average Division Measure (DM) for KCMO School Board
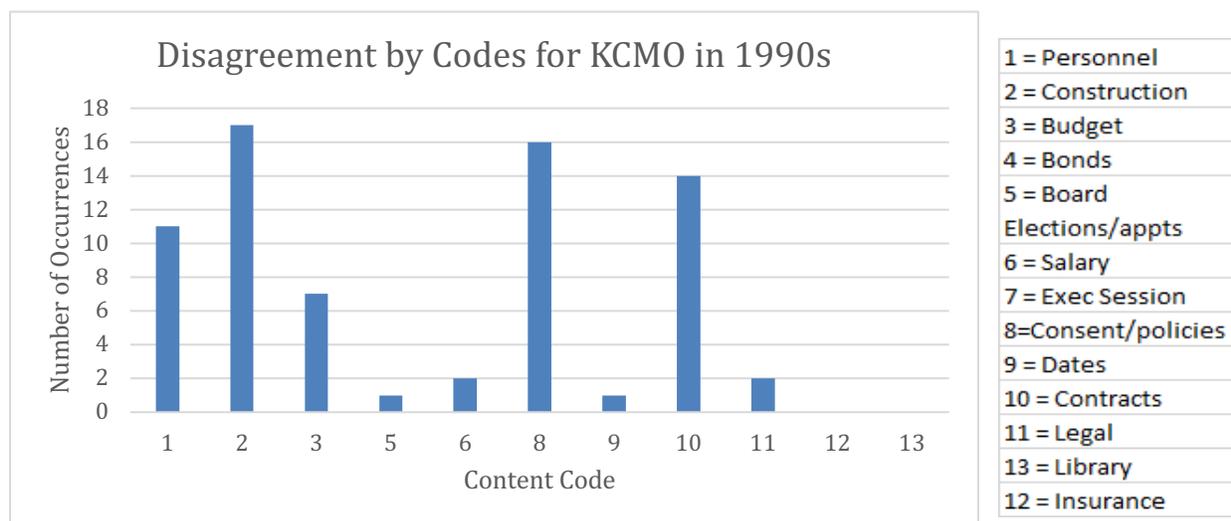

Average DM for KCMO School Board
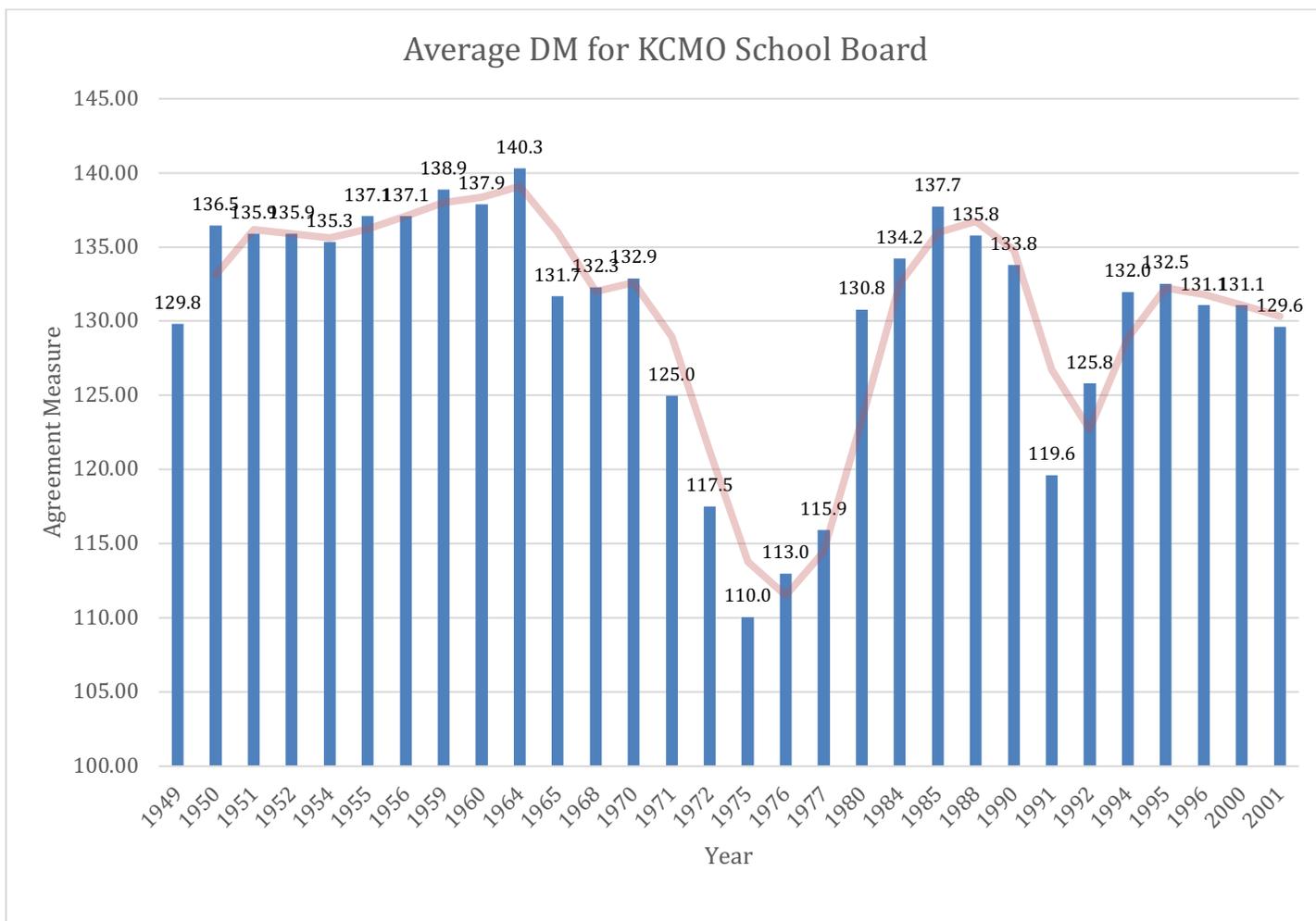
On the other hand, it also would give the school board tools to remedy the segregation that it previously could not attain, mainly funding. Judge Clark's decision is more than likely what influenced the increase in the school board's agreement measure in the 1980s that can be seen when looking at Figure 1. Financial problems plagued the school district in the 1970s, but it was the 1980s that would finally bring funding to the school district and a positive look for the future.

One might ask if the school board began to see an increase in funding and things were going positively, then why would there be a decrease in the agreement measure in the 90s? What started off as a promising ruling in the courts and an increase in funding for the school district,

continued on as a headache for the community and a cumbersome change for the school board.

Along with the funding came many things the school district would get wrong. First, from 1988-1989 an audit was conducted by the Desegregation Management Committee (DMC), a local committee established to help the transition into the new plan (Moran 2005). This audit found several issues with the accounting in the district, which lowered the overall confidence in the school board and the desegregation plan as a whole.

During this time, the school district also moved towards a magnet school plan, which was challenged by many in the state and even appealed in the courts. The program was touted as a benefit to the disadvantaged community of KCMO and would help to build curriculum that had fallen short during the segregation of years previous. In 1987, the DMC reported that they were very optimistic about the magnet school plan. However, three years later the same committee would comment that the magnet schools had fallen far short of expectations (Moran 2005). This added a negative connotation to the desegregation plan as well as reduced confidence from the community in the school board. Furthermore, it correlates with the topics of disagreements of the board. As shown in Figure 2, Disagreement by Codes for KCMO in 1990s, which highlights

Figure 2: Disagreement by Codes for KCMO in 1990s

1 = Personnel	
2 = Construction	
3 = Budget	
4 = Bonds	
5 = Board Elections/appts	
6 = Salary	
7 = Exec Session	
8=Consent/policies	
9 = Dates	
10 = Contracts	
11 = Legal	
13 = Library	
12 = Insurance	

the type of disagreements the school board was having during the 1990s, the board was disagreeing on personnel, construction, and policies which were directly related to the implementation of the desegregation plan. The board still had a significant amount of dysfunction, which is clear in the decline of their agreement measure, but that dysfunction was targeted towards topics that dealt directly with the court case and influx of funding.
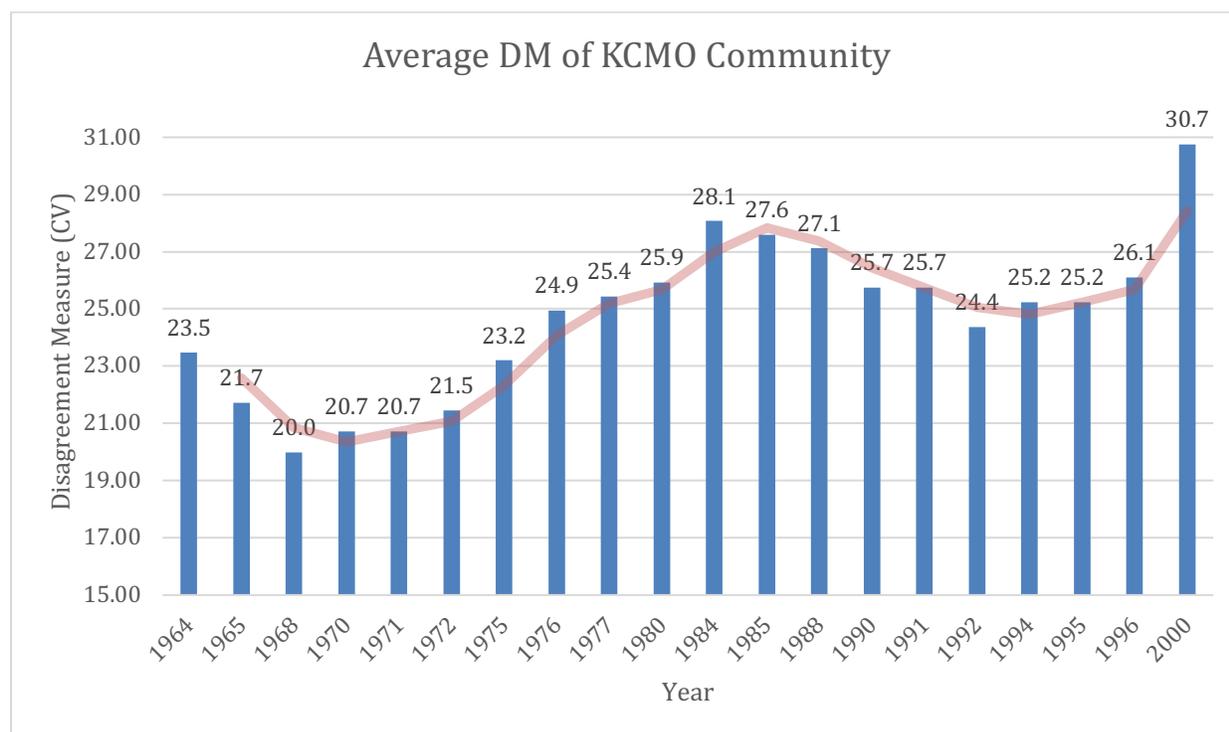
What Figure 2 helps depict is the strength in the connection between the community and the school board. Peter Moran discusses how the community was becoming frustrated with the board because of the issues with the desegregation plan, and at the same time, the community was becoming frustrated with the new construction (2005). In order to implement the district's plan for the magnet school expansion, as well as help the segregation issue, construction was a major push for the district. This came in the form of several new sites as well as updates to current infrastructure. However, as the plans moved forward, the district continued to struggle with implementation of construction. The massive spike in disagreements on construction in Figure 3 shows that the board was finding it difficult to come to a consensus on what to do with the new construction and was getting heavily influenced by the community. "On occasion during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the school board was bitterly divided by the narrow interests of individual board members seeking to secure magnet programs, facilities improvements, and educational enhancements for the sub-districts which they represented (Moran, 2005, p. 229)." The board would continue to move through this time period with several disagreements about locations and several disagreements about changes to construction plans.

By the time the early 1990s had arrived, many of the previous supporters of the plan had become dissidents. The largest negative impact came from the taxes that Judge Clark

introduced. While the district had been given a massive boost in finances, many did not believe

it was having a profound impact on the district. Throughout the 18 years of the *Missouri v.*

Jenkins case, the state and taxpayers would appeal several times until the case would reach the

United States Supreme Court. Finally, in 1994, the United States Supreme Court would put an

end to the remedy Judge Clark implemented in the 1980s. In 1999 the courts would declare that

the desegregation movement must cease. Surprisingly, the court would also make the statement

that the goal of desegregation had been met. However, the schools and community remained just

as financially and racially segregated as before. With the decision of the Supreme Court came an

end to the contentious litigation and the two-billion-dollar remedy that came with it (Moran,

2005). During this period of "post litigation", we begin to see the increase in the agreement

measure in the school district. Without the litigation and continual influx of money, one could

infer that the school district would have less arguments. Regardless, the ending result of the

court case frames the impact of the community and outside factors on the school board. To

further strengthen the relationship between the board and the community, the data from the

community voting patterns must be analyzed and the compared alongside the data from the

school board to see if there is a correlation.

Analysis of KCMO Community

The next step in connecting the community and the school board is to show how the

community reacted during the same timeframe the school board was seeing a decline in their

agreement measure. Figure 3, Average DM for KCMO Community, shows the data collected, in

the form of voting patterns, from the community of KCMO. By looking at the voting patterns of

the community of KCMO, this study is able to show the correlation between the decline in the

agreement measure of the community and of the school board. The agreement measure of the

Figure 3: Average Division Measure (DM) of KCMO Community

Figure: Average DM of KCMO Community. Y-axis: Disagreement Measure (CV). X-axis: Year. Values by year — 1964: 23.5, 1965: 21.7, 1968: 20.0, 1970: 20.7, 1971: 20.7, 1972: 21.5, 1975: 23.2, 1976: 24.9, 1977: 25.4, 1980: 25.9, 1984: 28.1, 1985: 27.6, 1988: 27.1, 1990: 25.7, 1991: 25.7, 1992: 24.4, 1994: 25.2, 1995: 25.2, 1996: 26.1, 2000: 30.7.

community, in comparison to the school board, appears to move similarly. One distinct difference is the delay the school board's agreement measure has in comparison to the community's. One can infer that if the community is having an influence on the school board, then the data will show movement in the community before the school board. As the community is analyzed alongside its historical context, it is important to keep in mind this "delay" in the data because it will showcase an affective relationship between the school board and the community. Figure 3 shows the first definitive decline in the community's agreement measure almost at the exact same time school board was experiencing a decline. Because of the "delay" in the affective relationship, the community's agreement measure begins its decline first. The decline starts in the mid 1960s but ends in the early 1970s, after which the agreement measure begins to increase.

As stated before, this time period for the community was filled with economic and racial difficulties. The KCMO downtown area was beginning to decline thereby losing much of its appeal

to outside conventions and business. Racial segregation and discrimination issues were becoming so widespread that race riots broke out in 1968. By 1978, the downtown area of KCMO had segregated itself so much that it had become the primary shopping location for African Americans in the community (Shortridge, 2012). Many factors played into the re-segregation of the community, the primary culprits being the housing markets and the school districts. The school districts did little to alleviate the segregation of their schools, by the 1970s even the forced busing had stopped and transfers to other schools were abundant (Moran 2005). The real estate market also profoundly impacted the community by implementing racially driven practices that re-segregated the community by the late 1960s and early 1970s (Gotham 2014). All of these accumulating factors led to a community that was divided and dysfunctional, which is shown in Figure 3.

What's interesting is how these events coincide with the decline in the agreement factor in both the community and the school board. This pivotal correlation in the historical context and the data makes the connection between the community and the school board that has been missing in past literature. In the timeframe of the 1960s-70s, the community and the school board experienced many of the same issues dealing with economic difficulty, as well as racial segregation. Middle class, white families began to leave KCMO and go to the outlying suburban areas. That exodus left mainly low-income families and high-income families, along with businesses that struggled to remain in the KCMO area. Research shows that very low-income families tend to thrive and have greater upward mobility when they are paired with middle-income families (Galster, Booza, & Cutsinger, 2008). When middle-class families left the area during this time to flee to the suburbs, the very low-income families that were left actually suffered more-so than if the middle-income families had stayed. It speaks to the impact the community and changes within the community had on the

cohesiveness of the school board as well as the community. This supports the conclusion that community cohesiveness impacts school board cohesiveness.

Secondary to the impact historical events had on the community, was the impact the increase of ethnic diversity was having in KCMO. While the city was becoming more segregated, it was also becoming more diverse as well. During this time period, not only was the school district and community plagued with increasing financial difficulties, but it was also facing an increase in Hispanic and Black constituency activism (Moran, 2005). According to studies, "a completely homogenous country would expect an almost 2% higher rate of annual growth compared to a completely fractionalized country (Kolo, 2012, p. 94)." Therefore, research shows that as ethnic diversity increases, so does the negative impact it has on the potential for growth in the community. It's important to acknowledge this because it further supports the connection between the community and the school board. As the community became more ethnically diverse, the difficulties and divisions in the community bled into the governance as well. "Ethnic diversity can affect contributions to community organizations through the diversity of preferences, transaction costs of organizing, and inter household considerations in the form of altruism towards one's own ethnic community. (Okten & Osili, 2004, p. 606)." This article, *Contributions in Heterogeneous Communities: Evidence from Indonesia*, discusses the impact that ethnic diversity has on the country of Indonesia, and it suggests that ethnic diversity can have a negative impact on contributions to the community as a whole. The literature is continuing to support the findings of this research study, that the community has a connection with the governance structure and can influence it.

A second time period of community decline in its agreement measure is during the 1990s, as can be seen in Figure 3. This time period aligns well with the school board during their declining agreement measure, which makes sense because a large portion of why the community was

experiencing problems was due to the same events with the school board. Remember that during this

time, the community was being forced from their homes in order to build new schools, and taxes

were being raised in order to help pay for the desegregation movement. The community was being

hit on both fronts: the high-poverty families were being displaced from their homes by a school

system they did not trust, and the higher-income businesses and families were being taxed in order to

pay for the changes in the school system they did not trust. The historical context is important here

because it further proves the relationship between the community and the school board. The

disappointment with the integration plan the school district had created was becoming very evident

in the way the community was reacting. Shortridge (2012) points out that,

> "Kansas City people sacrificed quality of education to the shorter-term goals of integration
> and job retention. Despite the influx of some $2 billion in extra funding for education, the
> city in the 1990s remained as deeply divided racially, economically, and geographically as it
> had been before (p. 142)."

When comparing the data from the KCMO school district and community, it is evident that there is a

connection between the community and the school board. The next step in making that connection is

to analyze the data from the school board and the community side by side.

Figure 4, Comparison of Division Measure Trendlines KCMO, shows the comparison between the

trendlines in the Division Measures of both the KCMO community and the school board. The ebb

and flow in the data sets is clear and the manner in which they mimic each other is visually apparent.

On average, the community has a much lower agreement measure (due mainly to the quantity of data

points), so in order to make the comparison the charts had to be truncated in a way that make a visual

comparison possible. When that comparison is made, it is obvious that the school board and the

community follow each other's dips in the agreement measure in two time periods, the 1960s-70s

and the 1990s. When making a direct calculation of the correlation between the KCMO school

district and community, it comes out to .114. However, if we are to assume that there is a lag

between the community and the school board because of the influence the community has on the school board, then the correlation comes out differently. When calculating for a lag in the correlation between the school board and the community, the coefficient is .251 when lagging one year and .462 when lagging two years, see Figure 5, Correlation Coefficients of Community and School Board. It is evident, both visually and statistically, a connection between the community and the school board exists. The next step in analyzing the results is to see how the community of board of Blue Valley compare to each other. As the connection is being made, it is evident that the events and circumstances of KCMO are a pivotal driving force in the relationship between the community and school board that is not seen in a more affluent school district like Blue Valley.

Figure 4: Comparison of Division Measure Trendlines KCMO

Comparison of Division Measure Trendlines KCMO

Figure 5: Correlation Coefficients of Community and School Board
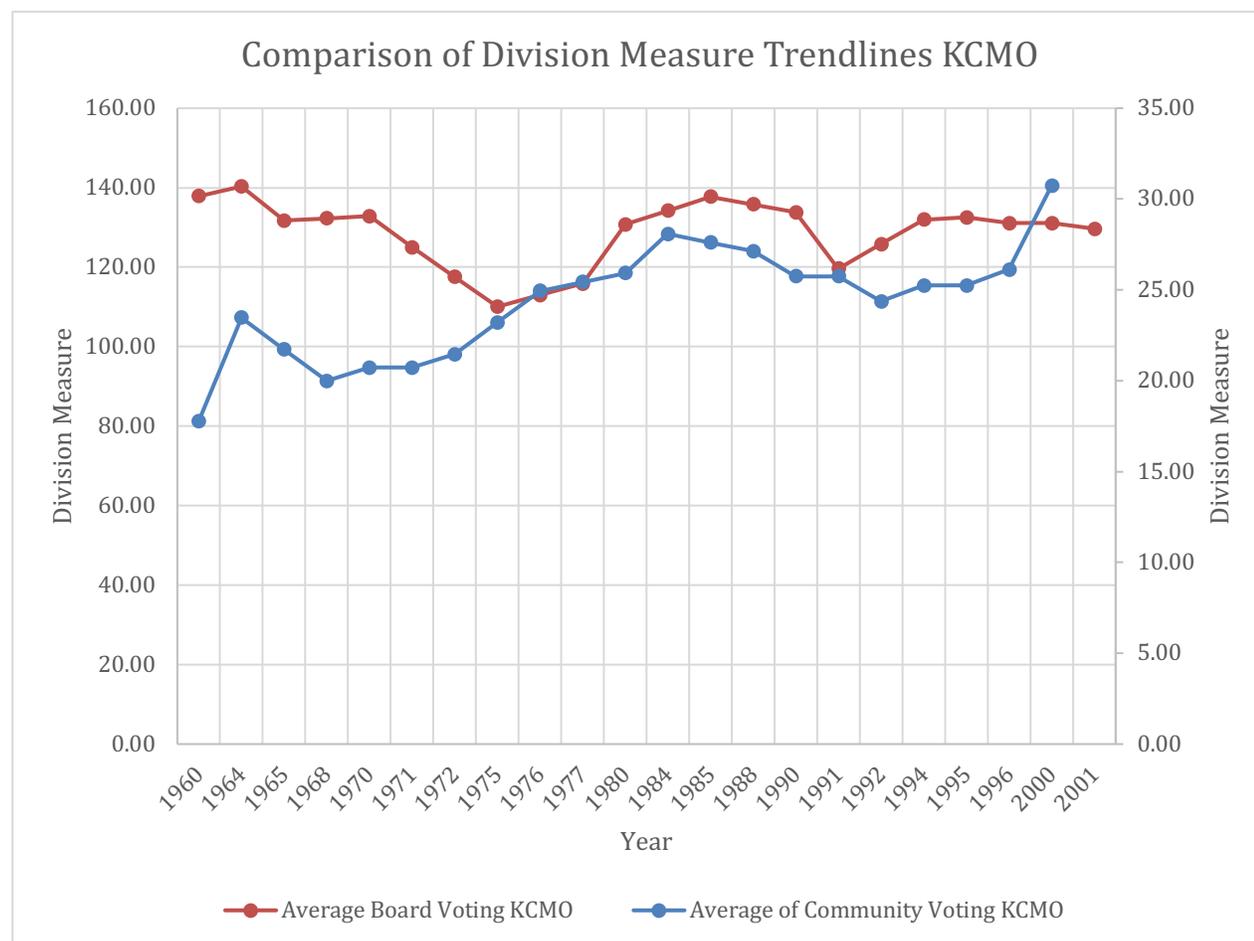
Correlation Coefficients of Community and School Board
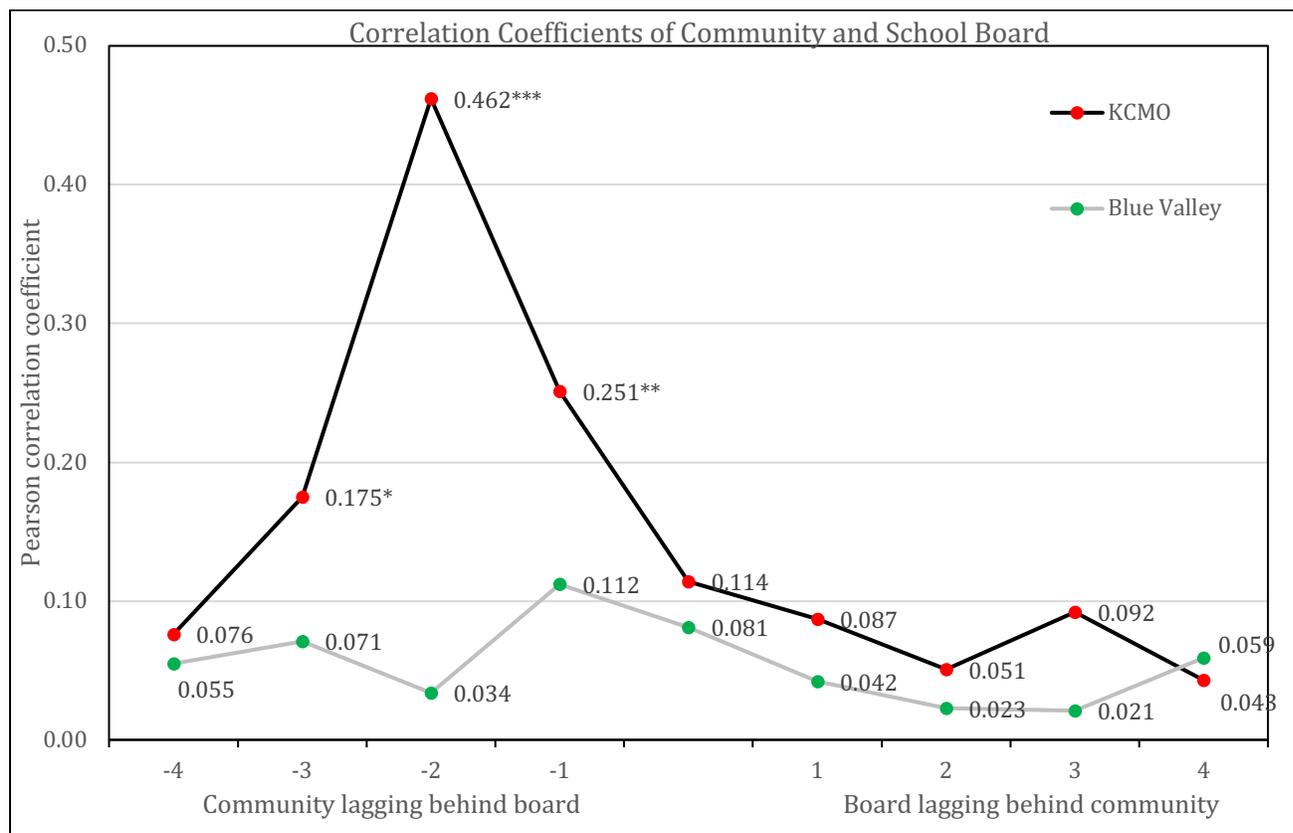
Analysis of Blue Valley and Overland Park

In order to effectively determine if there is a connection between a school board and the community within which it is situated, two communities were chosen. Blue Valley School District (BVSD) is situated inside the community of Overland Park (OP). When analyzing the connection between BVSD and OP, similar to what was done with KCMO, the correlation does not exist. This is important because it shows the impact that the community like KCMO has on the school district. As stated before, the relevance of community impact on board function is greater and thus more visible under more disadvantaged community conditions, such as those in KCMO. Showing the lack of connection between BVSD and OP will help to solidify the findings because the community of OP lacks the elements that make KCMO face the difficulties

it did. The following section will discuss the findings of the analysis between BVSD and OP as well as the overall impact it has to the findings of this study.

Figure 6, Average Division Measure BVSD, shows the average division measure in BVSD for the data collected. Again, it is important to note that BVSD did not experience the difficulties that the KCMO school district experienced. Racial tension and economic difficulties were not present in BVSD. In fact, during the time period KCMO was experiencing many of its difficulties with segregation issues, BVSD was undergoing an increase in population because the middle-class families from the inner-cities were beginning to move out to suburbs like BVSD (Shortridge, 2012). The community was expanding, and so was the average household income. This means that financial issues were never present for BVSD, and so dysfunction in the school board was never present because of these issues. Figure 6 demonstrates this well.
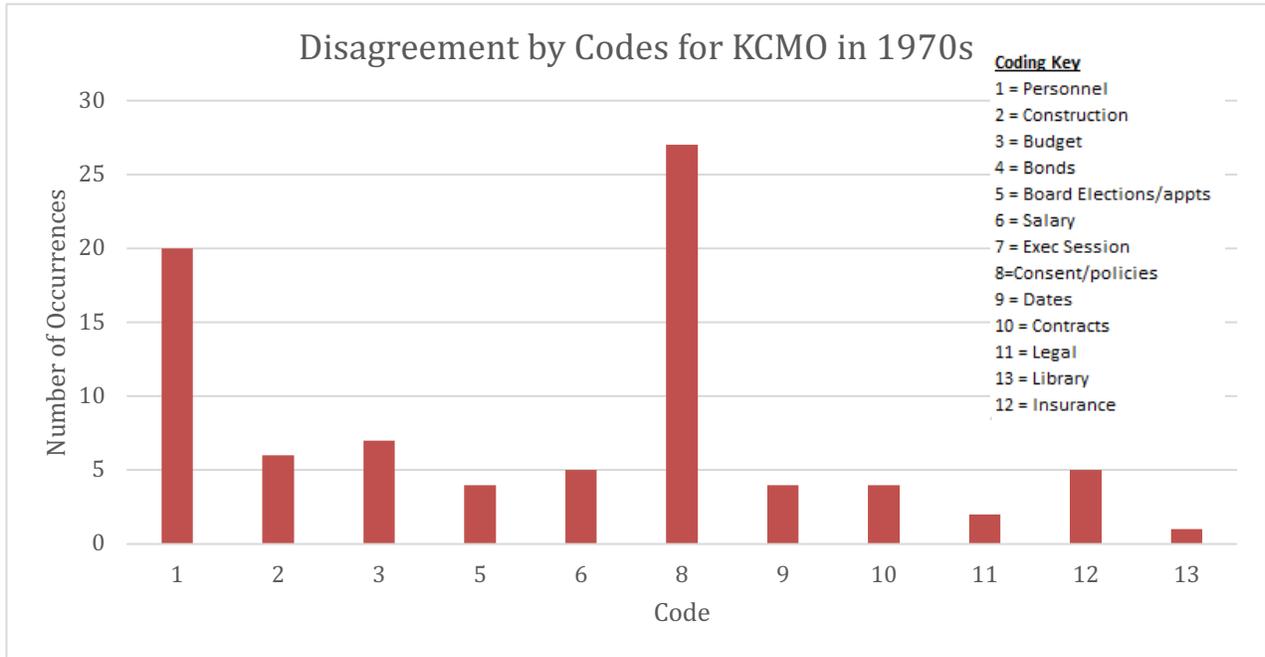
First, the average disagreement measure as compared to the KCMO school board is higher. KCMO school board has an average agreement measure of 132.85, which is six points lower than the average of BVSD at 138.5. Furthermore, the dips in the agreement measure don't follow historical trends or context, nor do they reach the low levels that KCMO reaches. KCMO has a disagreement measure that reaches a low point in the 1970s of 112, which is well below the low point of BVSD of 121. Finally, when calculating the correlation between BVSD and the OP community, at its peak it only reaches .112 as shown in Figure 5. Clearly the difference between the two districts is both statistically and visually apparent as the data is analyzed.

A second thing to consider is the content of the disagreements between the two districts. When analyzing BVSD over the term of the data collected, the disagreements are more evenly spread out when compared to KCMO in the 1970s (the lowest point in KCMO). This can be interpreted as a more functioning school board because the topics are more differentiated and not focused on specific interests like in KCMO. As stated earlier, KCMO was at a point where the
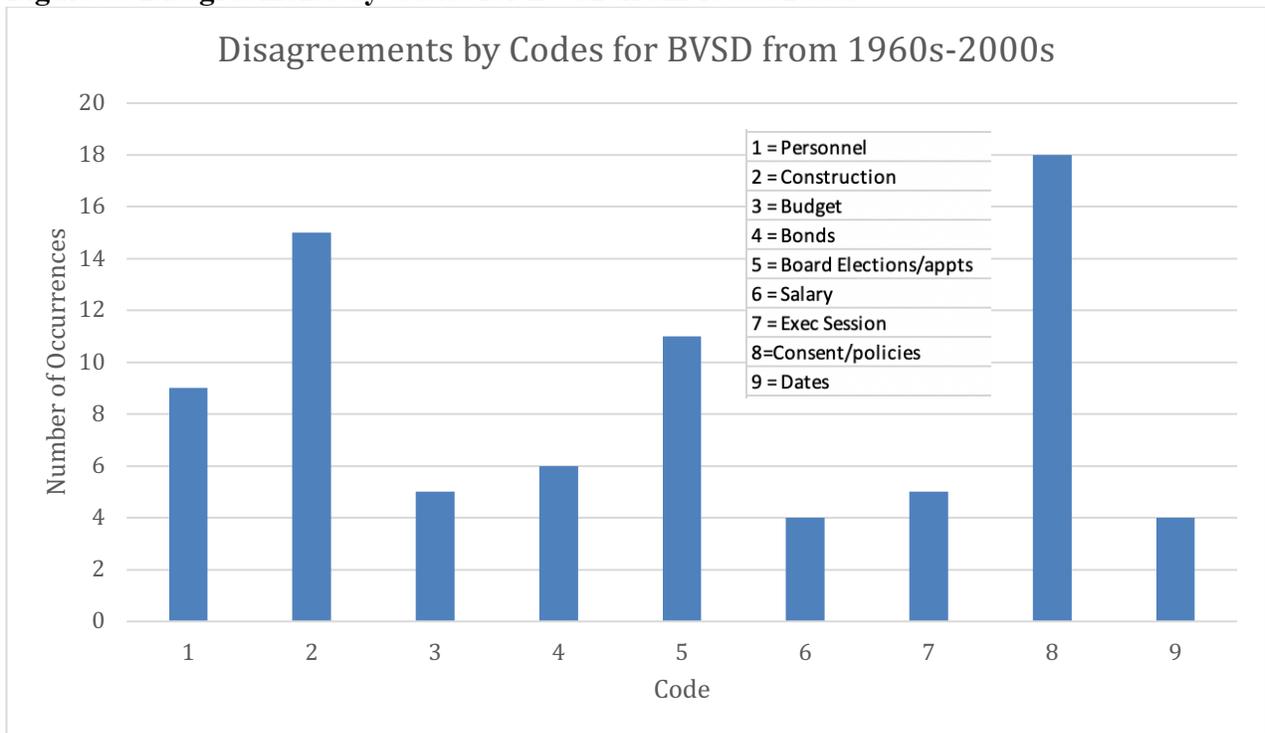
Figure 6: Average Division Measure BVSD

Average Division Measures BVSD
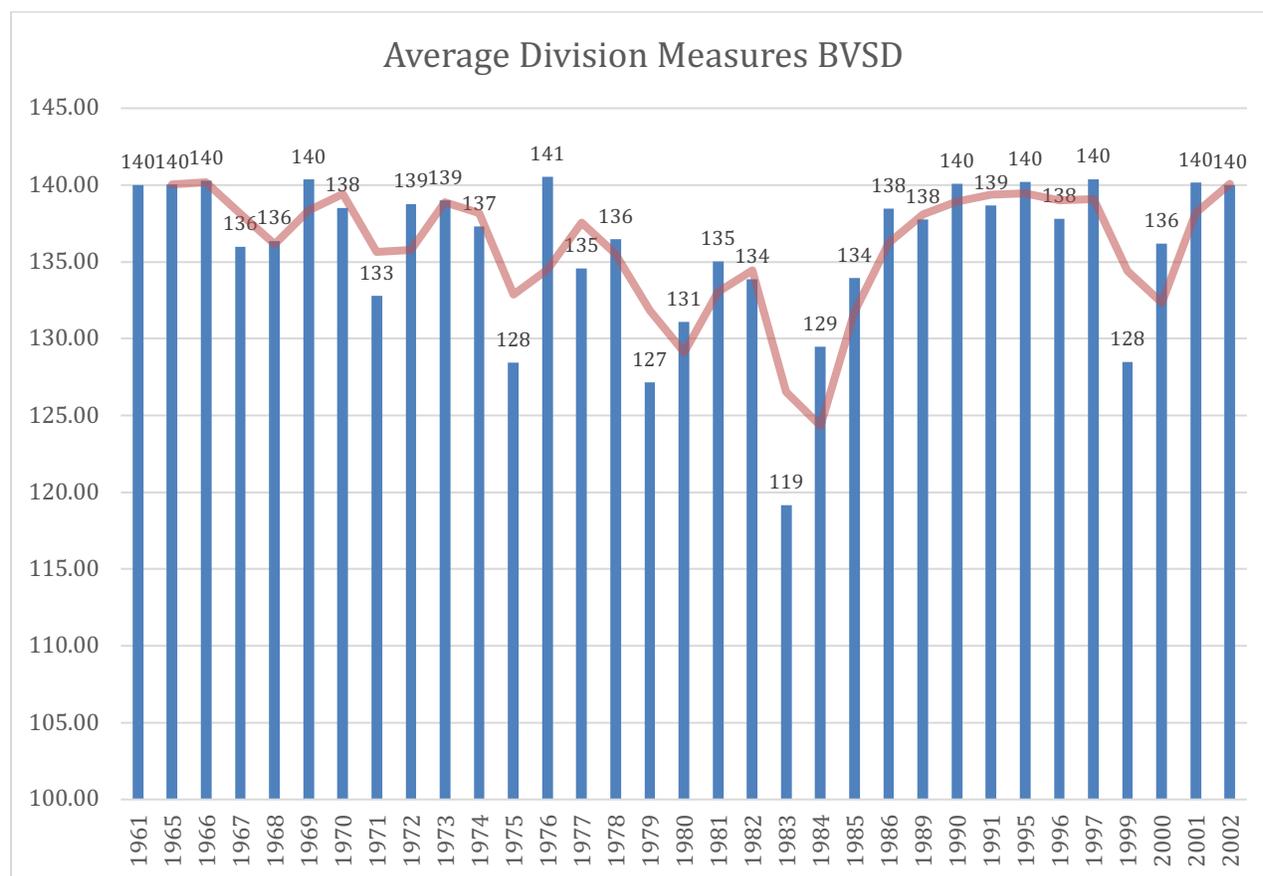
interest groups and individual board member concerns were driving the decisions and

dysfunction of the board. This translates to an unbalanced disagreement analysis as is present in

Figure 7, Disagreement by Codes for KCMO in 1970s. Another interpretation is that the

finances of the KCMO school district and community were affecting the dysfunction, further

connecting the community with the school board. When, in the 1990s, the district began to

receive more funding from the state, the school district began to function similar to BVSD.

When comparing Figure 2 to Figure 8, Disagreements by Codes for BVSD from 1960s-2000s, it

is apparent the school districts begin to look more alike in the spread of disagreements. KCMO

school district, while still functioning at a much higher level of dysfunction than BVSD (keeping

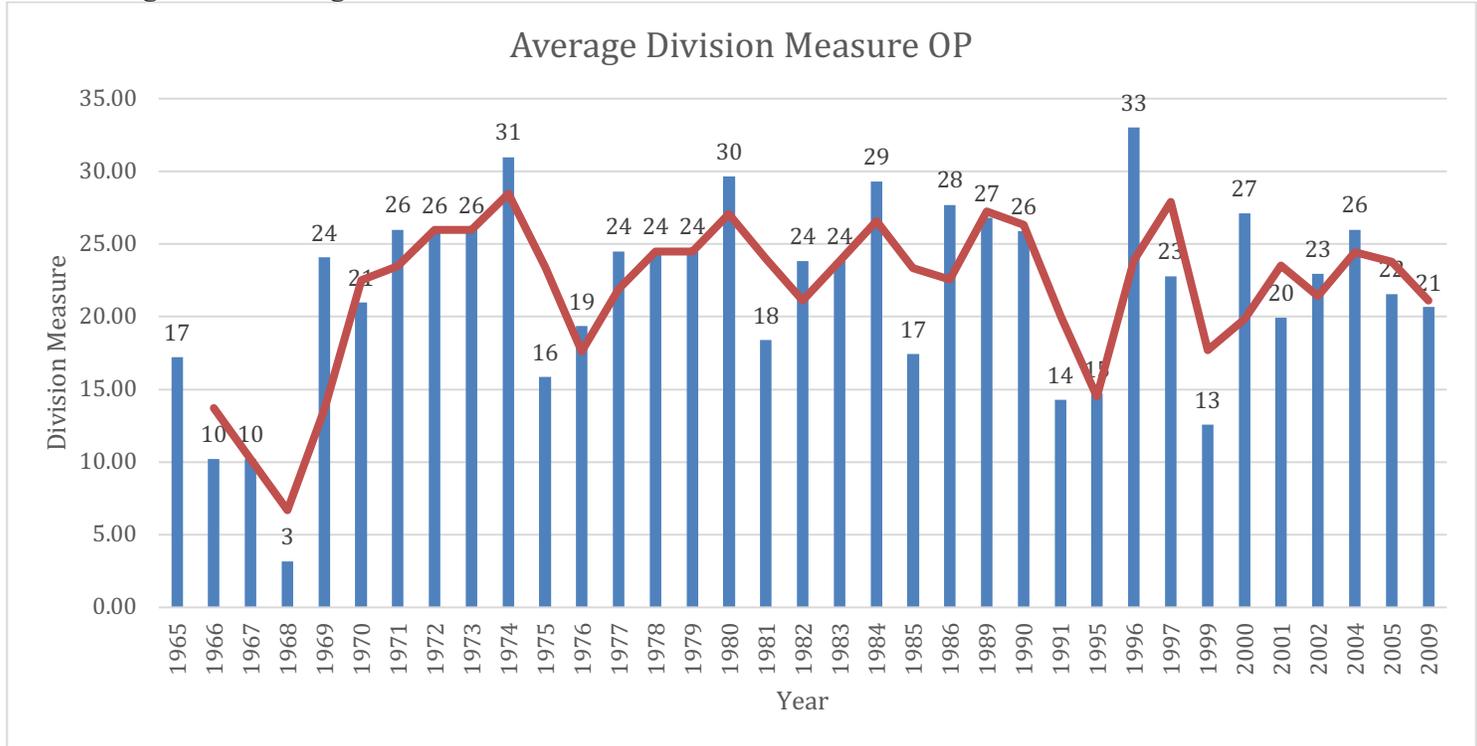in mind that over the four decades BVSD was analyzed they had 77 disagreements in

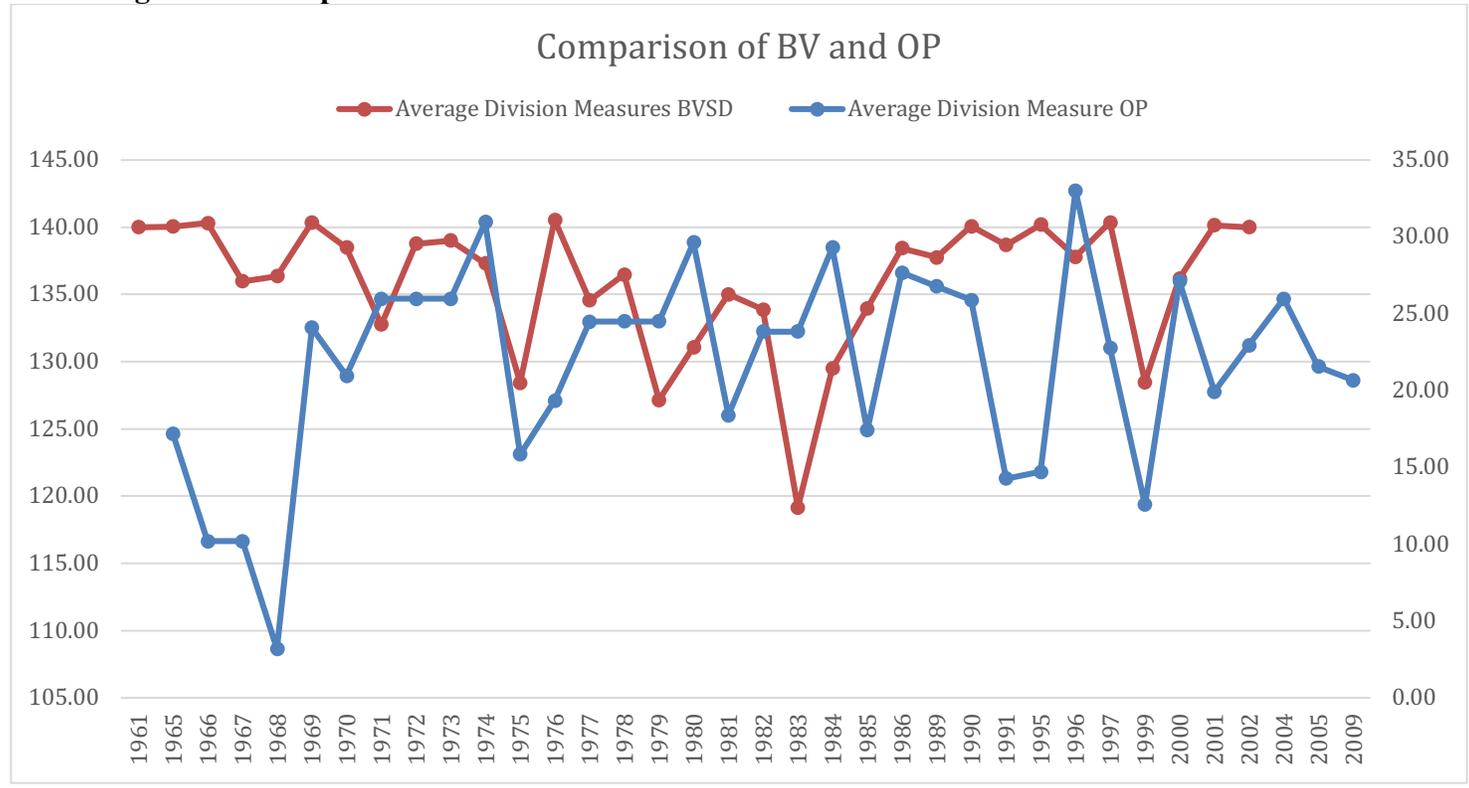**Figure 7: Disagreement by Codes for KCMO in 1970s**

Disagreement by Codes for KCMO in 1970s

Coding Key
1 = Personnel
2 = Construction
3 = Budget
4 = Bonds
5 = Board Elections/appts
6 = Salary
7 = Exec Session
8=Consent/policies
9 = Dates
10 = Contracts
11 = Legal
13 = Library
12 = Insurance

Figure 8: Disagreements by Codes for BVSD from 1960s-2000s

Disagreements by Codes for BVSD from 1960s-2000s

1 = Personnel
2 = Construction
3 = Budget
4 = Bonds
5 = Board Elections/appts
6 = Salary
7 = Exec Session
8=Consent/policies
9 = Dates

Figure 9: Average Division Measure OP

Figure 10: Comparison of BVSD and OP

comparison to 71 in a 10-year timeframe for KCMO) begins to mimic BVSD when they receive an influx of funding.

The most impactful comparison comes when comparing BVSD to the community of OP. In the context of this study, if the community of BVSD does not correlate with the community of OP, then it would further the presumption that the community has a stronger impact on a functioning government when the community has a higher level of disadvantage. Figure 9, Average Division Measure OP, shows the disagreement measure of the community of OP over the similar time period to the analysis done with the data of BVSD. As the data shows, the community has a very sporadic disagreement measure when compared to KCMO. Figure 10, Comparison of BVSD and OP, shows the important comparison between BVSD and OP. At first glance, the school district has little to no connection to the community. When calculating a statistical correlation between the BVSD and OP data, the correlation comes to a -.07. Both visually and statistically the relationship between the community and the school district is weak. This is paramount in the discussion of establishing a relationship between the community and the school board. The narrative this data gives is that the more a community faces disadvantages (i.e., ethnic diversity, segregation, economic diversity, and economic hardships) the more challenge the governing body will face, and thus, the larger influence the community will have on the governing body. It's important to note that when compared to KCMO, BVSD and OP face very little, if any, of these issues. This is not to say that BVSD and OP don't face hardships. When looking at Figure 5, it is obvious that BVSD had their disagreements, but they happen rarely, are less contentious, and do not happen in relation to the community of OP.

Summary

The relevance of community impact on board function is greater and thus more visible under more disadvantaged community conditions. When analyzing the school district of KCMO and the community of KCMO, a clear relationship is both visible and statistically present. The relationship is more prevalent because the community and school district of KCMO faced greater disadvantaged conditions in both the community and the school board. When comparing BVSD and the community of OP, the relationship between both is neither visibly nor statistically present. The inference made here is that the connection between OP and BVSD is not present because the community of OP does not face the hardships that KCMO faces; in fact, they are a vastly more beneficially homogenous community than KCMO. OP benefits from a higher average family income and is primarily ethnically similar, especially during the years the data was sampled for this study. While OP and BVSD may have their disagreements, they are not as impactful as the influences that the broader community of a less affluent setting will have on the school district.

In addition to the comparison between the Division Measures, the comparison between the types of conflicts that occurred on each board is informative. In KCMO, when funding was extremely low and the community was undergoing drastic changes in the 70s, the boards range of disagreements focused on topics unrelated to their major issues at hand, showing a lack of unified governance. After the KCMO school board received more funding through the court system, their themes of disagreements began looking more like BVSD, and their focus shifted to topics that concerned actual governance needs. While KCMO still struggled in those years and had a greater number of disagreements when compared to BVSD, it shows the impact that affluence and funding can have on a system.

The relationship between the KCMO school board and the broader community is further amplified by the historical context provided in this study. As the community underwent several racial changes and financial difficulties, so too did the school board. As the division measure of the community increased and decreased, so too did the division measure of the school board. This shows the truth of the hypothesis that the cohesiveness of a community influences the cohesiveness of the school board and is further exacerbated when the community is more disadvantaged.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not a connection between the community and the school board exists through analyzing the community voting patterns and school board decisions. In beginning to answer this question, the review of school board literature shows the reader that current studies address the school board's dysfunction in several key areas. One area of dysfunction this study focuses on is divisiveness, or the lack of agreement on a school board when looking at board member voting. The literature shows that divisiveness leads to many issues on a school board, primarily the board's lack of decisiveness which leads to dysfunction of the overall school board. School boards have been criticized for being too divisive and polarized in their decision-making, which leads to the disenfranchisement of stakeholders (Kowalski, 2013; Danzberger, 1994). As a result of this and other dysfunctions of the school board, many systems have attempted to figure out solutions for these school board failings. What the literature consistently leaves out through analyzing school board failings is the community. In discussing each of the failures, current school board literature addresses the dysfunction without accounting for the impacts of community level factors on the school board.

To begin accounting for the community, the first step was to review literature on drawing a connection between the school board and the community. The connection was made by defining the school board as a bureaucracy (Weber, 2013) and then reviewing literature on how outside influences impact bureaucracies. As discussed earlier, outside factors (i.e. the community) have a profound impact in shaping the bureaucracy of school boards, from forcing it to seek legitimacy (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) to even shaping the way they view professionalism (Ritzer, 1975). This sociological literature helped to draw the connection, theoretically, between the community and the school board. The research done by this study will

help to empirically answer this study's research question; is there a correlation between community cohesion and school board cohesion?

This study has attempted to fill that gap and address the extent to which the community has an impact on the school board. By using historical context and highlighting community economic, political, and ethnic difficulties as the underpinnings of board dysfunction; this study will help to extend the research into school board failures. It is important to fill this gap because analyzing school board failures without accounting for the community's context would be ineffective in understanding why school boards fail.

In the previous chapter, the key findings were explained from the research of this study. Once again, two school districts from different levels of disadvantages were chosen to highlight the effect of adversity on the connection between school board cohesion and community cohesion. Kansas City Missouri School District was chosen because it faces high adversity within the community. The district is situated in an area with racial diversity and very low socio-economic status. Blue Valley School District was chosen because it faces very low adversity within the community. The community of Overland Park has little racial diversity and it has a high socio-economic status. The differences in these districts should help contextualize the impact that community adversity has on the connection between the community and the school board, while also allowing this study to discover whether there exists a connection between community cohesion and school board cohesion.

To answer this study's research question and draw a comparison between the cohesion of the community and the cohesion of the school board, a division measure was calculated. The division measure is a calculation of the level of disagreement on the school board and in the community through analyzing voting records. When comparing the KCMO school district's

division measure and the community's division measure, it is both visually and statistically evident that there is a correlation between the two. This relationship was further strengthened by adding the historical context of the community and school board to show the correlation of events with both district and community timelines. As the KCMO community's division measure decreased, showing that the community was becoming more divided, the KCMO school board's division measure also decreased, showing that the school board was becoming more divisive. Moreover, there was a delay in the calculated correlation which showed that the KCMO community would become more divisive before the KCMO school district. This may imply that the community has an altering effect on the school board, changing the school board's division measure.

When looking at the data from the school board of BVSD and the community of OP, the same division measure calculation was completed to compare the cohesion of both. The data showed that there was little to no connection between the BVSD board and the community of OP. This lack of correlation may be related to the beneficial homogeneity of the community of OP and BVSD. OP and BVSD both lack the diversity and therefore difficulty, that KCMO faces. In fact, when comparing the types of disagreements between KCMO and BVSD, it was discovered that as KCMO received higher levels of funding (decreasing their financial adversity), their disagreements began to look more like BVSD. This implies that the level of adversity seems to have a relationship to the ability of a school board to function. These results helped to answer the research question about a connection between community and school board cohesion. It appears there is a connection between the cohesion of the school board and the community, and that connection is strengthened when a community and school board face greater adversity economically and socially.

Insight on Community Influence

The results of this study are not surprising, especially when taking into consideration what the sociological research tells us. As stated before, the school board is a heavily institutionalized bureaucracy that is vulnerable to outside influences as it continues to seek legitimacy (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Kirst, 1994; Weber, 2003). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) discuss how outside influences, such as the community, can have a strong impact on the way a bureaucracy will function. This is reinforced when looking at the data from the school board and community in KCMO. The community is acting on the school board as an outside factor would act on a bureaucracy. Furthermore, it is even more profound to notice the delay in the correlation between KCMO school board and community. Because the correlation is stronger when you lag the comparison between the school board and community, it helps connect the idea that the community is actually having an impact on the school board. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that current research on school boards tend to leave the importance of the community out or consider the community as an ancillary influencer. What the data from this study helps emphasize is the importance of considering the community as a primary impact on school board functioning.

Another example of this is again reinforced when looking at KCMO during the desegregation movement and what the sociological research tells us in comparison. From chapter 2, Frankenberg and Diem's (2013) work was discussed as an example of how outside influences impact school boards because the desegregation movements in their work had such profound impacts on the school boards they studied. An almost identical situation occurred in KCMO with the desegregation movement and court case that occurred. The school district was being pushed and pulled from the community and the court system. This paralleled with

dramatic shifts in the division measure of the school board and the community during this time period. The impact of the desegregation movement, led by the outside forces, not only had a profound financial impact on the school district but also affected the way the school board functioned in looking at the division measure. Furthermore, as funding was provided from the desegregation movement, the school board's divisiveness, or topics of disagreement, changed to model something closer to a less divisive school district like BVSD. The importance of the community and a strong influencer on the school board continues to be highlighted by the findings and supporting research.

Even when considering BVSD and the community of OP, the importance of the community cannot be ignored. Even though there was not a correlation between BVSD and OP, that does not lead to the conclusion that there is not a connection. The fact that the connection between community and school board is strengthened by greater community adversity is only further highlighted by the results of the BVSD and OP comparison. Since the community of OP has high socio-economic status and very little diversity, equating to an overall low level of adversity, it is natural to infer that the school board would have low levels of divisiveness. Furthermore, because the OP community functions in a low adversity environment, the school board is able to function independently of the community. This concept is supported from the community of Montegrano as referenced chapter 2 (Banfield, 1958). Because Montegrano had such high adversity, their government could not function because it was dependent on the community to function and the community was only focused on themselves as individuals. In a community like OP where the adversity is so low, the government is allowed to function as expected, because it is no longer dependent on the community. The data and supporting sociological research continue to highlight the importance of the community and considering it

as a primary influencer on the functioning of the school board. The issue with current research and even improvement plans for school boards, is that they only focus on the school board almost entirely independent of the community. If improvement is to be made with a school board, the community must be taken into consideration, not as a footnote, but as a primary influence.

With that in mind, as well as the understanding that school boards are a deeply institutionalized system, it is important to look at ways to effectively improve school boards instead of replacing them as some literature suggests from chapter 2. The overall concept of government is to help manage the people and improve the community. In the cases of school boards, specifically ones situated within difficult communities, this does not seem to be the case. Again, the Montegrano community is a great example of an ineffective system of government: the disadvantaged community overpowered the effect of government (Banfield, 1958). The basic assumption made by many in education is that a good functioning school board should improve the school system and by default, improve the community. So, in return, much of the improvements and "fixes" are targeted towards the school board or the school system as a whole. An excellent example of this is the desegregation court case that affected the KCMO school district. This was a solution that was wholly put on the shoulders of the school district. In fact, the school district tried to make changes to the community by forcing integration from the outside suburbs, which was denied in the courts (Moran, 2005). Instead, the courts pumped money into the system and forced change on the school district alone. This had a positive effect on the school board and the division measure, their disagreements even began to look more like the high functioning BVSD, however eventually the division measure fell and dysfunction set in again with a string of new court cases and issues. In this instance, the community was

purposefully left out by the courts, but in most school improvement measures the community

continues to be left out. The fatal flaw with current research lies in missing the powerful

antecedent of school board improvement, the community. Fixing issues with school boards, and

by relation school districts, cannot be limited to only fixes within the school system; it must look

at community improvement as well.

The concept of failing school districts and school boards in disadvantaged communities is

not limited to KCMO. As education continues moving forward from the *Brown v Board of*

Education decision, society continues to be stuck with regard to equality of public schools.

Their continues to be a need for improvement with the education system, especially with regard

to urban areas. In writing about the need for positive change with urban schools, Wanda

Blanchett, Vincent Mumford, and Floyd Beachum (2005, p. 5) write:

> Many urban school districts are a microcosm of this economic, political, and social phenomenon. In such places, there is an even greater need for positive change due to the fact that in central cities and metropolitan areas, students are confronted with numerous issues placing them in greater peril. Furthermore, urban schools are affected by city politics and dynamics. Also, they must continuously deal with negative notions of city students, lack of funding and support, and a growing bureaucracy (Alston, 2002). This type of disdain for city schools provides the rationale for the underfunding, marginalization, and collective criticism of urban schools (Ayers, 1994). These schools struggle to combat overwhelming odds and to skillfully avoid a spiraling cycle of despair (Sanders, 1999).

These authors continue on to discuss the opposite effect that is seen in the suburban school

districts which are predominantly white and are viewed as high-affluent and high-achieving.

They discuss how instructional staff hold higher degrees and there is a long list of people

wanting to work in those districts. These issues that continue to plague the public school system

are not ones that can be solely fixed by reforming the school districts alone. The bulk of these

social issues that urban school districts like KCMO face, are ones that must be addressed at a

community level. That is perhaps the greatest take-away from this study's research. To begin to

look at reforming a dysfunctional school board, the first step should be to look at ways to reform

the community as a whole, including the school board. Interestingly, the authors above give

suggestions on improvements in the post-*Brown v Board* era, and not a single one of those

improvements is focused entirely on the school board or even school district. The most inciteful

suggestion the authors give is to "make quality education everybody's problem" (Blanchett,

Mumford, and Beachum, 2005, p. 19).   In order to have meaningful reform that will positively

affect the school board and district, one must first look at reforming the community level social,

political, and economic issues.

Unfortunately, much of the current and past school initiatives do not consider improving

the community. Take, for example, the No Child Left Behind initiative as well as Race to the

Top initiative (Obama White House, 2012 and OSPI, 2011). Both of these initiatives shaped the

very foundation of schools and even have systematic impacts in today's educational landscape.

Yet, neither one of them paid attention to changes within the communities of the school districts.

It is not to say that the communities were ignored. Many changes from these initiatives took the

community into consideration by either weighting funding to the school district or setting the bar

lower for more difficult school districts, but neither initiative gave any funding to improving the

communities that the school districts were in. All funding and regulations went to, and were

directed towards, improving the school districts only. This is an example on a larger scale, but

even on a smaller scale, there are examples of missing the community antecedent. In fact, the

tendency to avoid the community is far greater with improvement initiatives than the tendency to

include the community.

A recent initiative in Kansas schools aims to improve the education system by beginning

a "Redesign" the school system (KSDE, 2019). This new initiative pushes for schools to

restructure the way they provide education. The first phases of the plan targeted only a few

districts; and those districts collaborated with teachers, administrators, the school board, and community members to discuss how they wanted to "Redesign" their system of education. Being such a new initiative, unfortunately, there is little research into the success or failure of the plan. However, it's important to note that once again any simultaneous improvement of the communities these school districts are situated in is left out. One might argue the community was considered because they were a part of the planning. Again, this is a "face-value" consideration of the community. All of the restructuring and "Redesign" of the school districts was targeted and completed by the school districts themselves. The community received no new initiatives, no new restructuring, and no new funding.

Opportunities for Further Research

In discussing the results of this study, it is important to note that there are naturally some limitations. One of the most impactful limitations is the limitation of time. For the extent of this study, only a select sample of the dates were chosen to scan for the comparison between school board and community. Future research could be done to expand on the sample size of the school board's minutes or the community's voting patterns. Furthermore, specific attention could be paid to the specific initiatives and school board decisions that was not able to be given during this study. This study took a very broad approach to the decisions of the school board and the community. Future research should be done into how the decisions of the community and the school board specifically align and impact the overall functioning of the district. It could be beneficial in strengthening the relationship between the community and the school board to analyze, in-depth, the decisions both KCMO and BVSD made and take a more qualitative approach to the decisions. If there is a definite distinction between BVSD and KCMO in each of

the decisions their boards made, then that would be one step further in strengthening this study's

theory.

Another limitation is that of the scope. This study focused only on the school boards as

they connected to the community. Voting patterns were used as a means to draw that connection

and emphasize the importance of considering the community as a primary influencer on school

boards. Further research could go into the effects that initiatives like Kansas "Redesign" have on

school boards and whether or not they have a positive impact on their division measures. This

highlights the limitation in the research of this study and the lack of qualitative examples.

Analyzing the difference between the "Redesign" initiative in affluent communities versus

disadvantaged communities could give great insight into the relationship established by this

study's theory. By extending this research, it might be easier to define the impact of an affluent

community versus a disadvantaged community on the relationship between the school board and

community. What the research might find is that these initiatives tend to be more helpful and

successful in more affluent communities. In more affluent school districts, the school board and

other forms of governance are not being considered a function of the community because the

tightly coupled relationship is not there. Therefore, the need to have simultaneous community

improvements within school district improvements is not necessary. This would agree with the

concept that more disadvantaged communities have greater and more visible connections with

school boards and other forms of governance. It also would help support the position that

successful reform of disadvantaged school districts cannot take place without considering the

community in need of reform as well.

One of the last limitations and discussions necessary to this study is what to do next. In

order to stay within a reasonable scope for this research study, the next steps are only discussed

and not researched. What is left to future research is completing a study on the impact of simultaneous community and school board improvements in a disadvantaged community. The practicality of such an endeavor is unknown to this researcher, however, the practical implication of cost is very apparent. As with any other institutional improvement, it more than likely would be a costly initiative. To address the community needs, a community of great disadvantage, while also addressing the school board or district needs, is no small financial endeavor. Perhaps this is why it has not been considered before. Where does that funding come from, if not the affluent communities? Also, what motivation does an affluent community have in involving themselves in such an initiative? When looking at the KCMO desegregation case, the urban setting tried to incorporate the suburban communities into the reform, but the court would not allow it (Moran, 2005). This line of questioning continues to roadblock any such grandiose plans, and perhaps, lead society to only focus on improvements directly related to the school district itself. It is much easier and less costly to adjust a governmental institution than try and fix social disadvantages.

As stated before, the scope of this research study was to find a connection between the school district and the community within which it governs. That connection was found both visually and statistically through analysis of school board decisions, community voting data, and historical context. The relevance of the community's impact on a school board's function is greater and more visible under more disadvantaged community conditions. To explore this further, qualitative research outside the scope of this study would need to be conducted on further identifying the impact a disadvantaged community has on a school board. This study's limitations provide that opportunities for further research. Paying special attention to the way that reform movements, like "Redesign", affect the disadvantaged communities could also help

shed some light on what future improvement initiatives should look like. Again, without taking the community into consideration as a primary influence, any reformation is likely to be stunted in its success.

Insights on Educational Impacts

This study's research has shown that school board cohesion and community cohesion are connected specifically when the school board is situated within a disadvantaged community. In these areas the school board's efficacy is greatly diminished because it is largely dependent on the community which is struggling due to its high adversity. The current prevailing issue with reform measures and research into school boards is the lack of consideration of the community as a primary influencer on school board functionality. Without considering the community within which a school board governs as an integral part of the reform movement, any initiative's success will face barriers. So what should be the next steps for districts like KCMO when considering this study's findings?

It was possibly stated no better than the earlier quote "make quality education everybody's problem" (Blanchett, Mumford, and Beachum, 2005, p. 19). For KCMO and districts similar, reform initiatives must first take into consideration the community they are situated in. Because the school board and the community are so tightly coupled in the efficacy, the two should also be tightly coupled in their plans for reform. School district officials should seek out community power centers such as city councils, local politicians, influential community members, and other organizations capable of community reform. This endeavor should also not be only one of "face-value" input into how the school district can make changes. School districts being the only "champion" of school district improvement, thereby being the only one that has to make any change, has to be considered a movement of the past. School communities and school

boards must work together on ways to change and improve the communities and the schools. These two groups must be both tightly coupled and willing to make changes.

Echoing this sentiment of shifting the burden of reform off of the school district solely, David Berliner (2014) makes a similar claim in the work *Effects of Inequality and Poverty vs. Teachers and Schooling on America's Youth*. The author begins the work with the idea that current school reform has been ineffective and needs to be abandoned. The concept of focusing reform on school teachers, curriculum, and in this study's case, school boards, is missing the target. In order to reform schools the author believes change must lie both outside and inside of the school district. In the case of Berliner's (2014) study, the largest concern came from income inequality in the community. This concept led the author to believe that the logical reform to improve education was actually to provide reform initiatives that were targeted towards combating income inequality and poverty. Providing "living wages" (Berliner, 2014, p. 10) for families in place of minimum wages, increasing the taxes paid by the communities and corporations, high quality pre-schools and summer programs, tutoring for students, adult education programs, and a visiting nurse program for new mothers, all are things that are geared towards impoverished families that help balance the effects of income inequality and can positive reform education. Within these reform ideas, the same underlying conclusion of this research study is centralized, the concept that community outside of the school district must be considered as a primary influence and be part of any comprehensive change. Berliner's work directly correlates with this study because it highlights the effect that the KCMO community, a community of income inequality and high poverty, has on the effectiveness of the KCMO school board and school district. Without addressing the community of KCMO, the school board and

district is left to shoulder the burden of a systematic change that it is does not have the capacity for.

Furthermore, it does seem that providing additional funding has an impact on the efficacy of school boards, as would be supported by some of the reform initiatives discussed in Berliner's (2014) study. When looking at the topics of disagreement for KCMO during the years of the desegregation court case where large amounts of funding were pumped into the school district, it shows a parallel to the topics of disagreement seen in BVSD. If BVSD is considered to be a highly cohesive board, also implying they are a high functioning board, then the KCMO board would want to be more like the BVSD board. The observation that the KCMO school board began to mirror the disagreements of the BVSD board implies that the funding had a positive impact on the school board's functionality. In the very least this would translate into a need for increased funding in school districts that face greater adversity. The impact an increase in funding would have is not just limited to the school board transformation but would also have a profound impact on the district as a whole. The increase in funding from the courts allowed the KCMO school board to think differently and address the issue of inequality in their district, rather than address how they would survive on such low funding. However, as can be seen from the results, this did not fix the issue entirely. The school board and community placed the burden of the issue on the school system, so the funding that was given went entirely to "fixing" the school district. The community shouldered none of the burden of reform and ultimately the changes the KCMO school board made had little effect on the outcome and the board returned to dysfunction until the courts terminated the case. While funding obviously had an impact on the school district, it is not the sole solution to the improvement of a school district. The funding

must be tied to reform that includes the community and considers the community as a primary influencer and not as an ancillary impact.

However, herein also lies some of the greatest inherent barriers to successful initiatives. In order to make the type of commitment to change this research shows necessary, a great amount of collaboration and funding must be made available. To overcome the issues these communities face (i.e. poverty, racial segregation, crumbling infrastructure) the amount of reform that must take place as well as the amount of capital, both fiscally and socially required, is daunting. Berliner's (2014) suggestions mention tax reform and the majority of other solutions require a large amount of funding from those tax reforms. That being said, even Berliner doesn't address how to overcome the politics of increasing taxes on corporations and the community. As stated before, this could be the reason that change has not taken place, because of the ease of effort and cost of simply requiring school districts to solely make the improvements. However, as this research has shown, without including the community in the change initiatives, or in the very least considering them as a primary influencer of school board success, very little improvement can be made.

On a smaller, more local level, this research impacts the way that school administrators should be viewing the community. In larger school districts, including those located in the suburbs, schools vary in adversity level from location to location. In many school districts, one side of the district may have a high-affluent setting that faces low adversity, while the other side has a low-affluent and high adversity setting. This means that administrators need to pay closer attention to the community that their buildings are situated in. If the community has such a tightly coupled relationship with the school board, then a natural assumption would be that the community would have a tightly coupled relationship with the individual schools, especially

when facing greater disadvantages. While this is an assumption and perhaps also an area that could use further research, it highlights the necessity for school administrators to incorporate the community. Just like the school board, the school administrator (district and building) should continue to strive in reaching out local centers of power within the community. As the school administrators seeks reformation, so should they seek for the surrounding community with local agencies. Partnerships with local agencies that support mental health, families of poverty, and social/racial equality should be actively included in the plans for school reform. School administrators will find that they will have greater success with reform initiatives if they incorporate the community as a primary influencer rather than as an afterthought.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the level of impact that community cohesion has on school board cohesion. The data showed that there exists a connection between both community and school board cohesion through analyzing the division measure of each. The connection between school board and community was strengthened by the context of the community. School boards that are situated within communities that face a greater level of adversity have a much stronger connection than school boards that are within highly affluent communities.

Since school boards are a bureaucracy which continue to be influenced by outside forces such as communities, it is vital that school board reform begin to consider communities in the improvement initiatives. In past research and reform initiatives, communities have been completely disregarded or considered, at best, as a secondary impact on school board functionality. In order to maximize the effect of an improvement initiative for school boards, community improvement initiatives must be considered in tandem with school board initiatives.

To seek school board improvement without considering the community as a primary influencer on school board cohesion, would stifle any attempt to improve the dysfunction of a school board. This research implies that school boards and school administrators must move forward with working collaboratively with community power centrals (i.e. politicians, community agencies, influential community members) in order to affectively create positive change within highly disadvantaged communities for both the community and the school district.

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