

## **WHERE IS THE COMMUNITY? NEW YORK CITY CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THE POWER ELITE**

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*Over the last decade, hedge fund managers and philanthropists have become powerful stakeholders in the local and national charter school movement. Unlike the teachers, parents, and community members who are directly linked to neighborhood schools, the roles and motivations of investors who are often referred to as educational entrepreneurs in this movement are not as transparent. This article provides a network analysis of three local charter school organizations with the primary objective of raising critical awareness of the rapid proliferation of charter schools in New York City and the powerful networks funding them, particularly when viewed in the context of New York State's original aims for charters. The authors conclude that the overrepresentation of corporate elites in the three charter school organizations analyzed suggest that members of New York City's power elite may have disproportionate access to governance of charter schools and existing public school facilities.*

In 1998, the New York State Legislature passed the Charter School Act, making it the 34<sup>th</sup> state in the nation to authorize charter schools. The legislation was passed despite fervent resistance on the part of the teachers' union as well as the New York City schools chancellor at the time, Rudy Crew. The Act allowed for an unlimited number of existing public schools to go through a charter conversion process and another one hundred new charter school start-ups. Below is an excerpt of the law:

The purpose of this [Act] is to authorize a system of charter schools *to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools* that operate independently of existing schools and school districts [authors' emphasis] (SUNY Charter Schools Institute).

At the time of its passage, the Act might have been seen to the casual observer as an effort to distribute power over public schools and to transfer control to historically disempowered educational stakeholders in the community. Looking back at the Act's original language, we notice the absence of any mention of the present day charter school movement's educational entrepreneurs and new philanthropists. These eager supporters of charter schools over the last thirteen years have taken the lead in establishing and operating New York City charter schools, as well as in funding the broader charter school movement. Unlike the teachers, parents and community

members whose interests are directly and obviously linked to neighborhood schools and publicly valorized in the Act, the roles and motivations of these financial investors are not easily decipherable.

Hedge fund managers, business leaders, investors, and philanthropists are new and influential stakeholders in the world of charter schools. They are the ones who found and finance the charter schools—from the hedge fund managers who co-founded Success Charter Network, Inc. with former City Council member Eva Moskowitz, to the wealthy and well-connected relatives of hedge fund managers who founded the Brooklyn Charter, the PAVE Academy, and who are the same individuals who also participate in the Board of Directors of the Girls' Preparatory Charter in Manhattan. We argue that the disenfranchised constituents envisioned by the original charter school law do not resemble the elite and powerful charter school champions of today.

### **Send in the Charters**

During the 2009-2010 school year, there were 99 existing charter schools in New York City, with 108 total projected for 2010-2011 (New York City Charter School Center, 2010). Recent legislation, for which Mayor Bloomberg strongly advocated, doubled the New York City cap on allowable charters to 200. According to a recent study, 49% of charter school students attend schools that are managed by what the researchers call "Community Grown Organizations" (CGOs), with 29% of students in non-profit "Charter Management Organizations" (CMOs), and the remaining 21% in for-profit "Education Management Organizations" (EMOs) (Hoxby, Muraka, and Kang, 2009).

Since almost half of the charter schools in New York City are dubbed in the study as *community grown*, it may seem at first glance that a substantial proportion of the New York City charter school movement is in alignment with the charter school legislation's stated purpose and has arisen from local neighborhoods. Yet the study defines EMO charters as a varied consortium of "parents and teachers, or a community organization that already provides social services to local residents, or an *individual from the business world who partners with people working in education*" [authors' emphasis]. Thus, hedge fund managers, et al., are included in this definition.

In the process of our research we asked the following questions: Why did the researchers include "individuals from the business world" in the Community Grown category? What shape would a description and evaluation of charter school management in New York City take if we identified just how many of those "individuals from the business world" hold central management and board positions, in contrast to those charter schools that were actually established and managed by teachers, parents or community organizations? The primary objective of our analysis is to raise critical awareness about the proliferation of charter schools in New York City and the powerful networks behind them, particularly when viewed in the context of New York State's original aims for charters. This article begins the process with an analysis of three local charter school organizations. Through this review we seek to begin a scholarly examination of the power dynamics of individuals and charter management organizations.

### **Who Should Govern Public Schools?**

In a recent analysis of public education privatization and drawing upon work by numerous political scientists, Stephen J. Ball (2007) makes a distinction between “government” and “governance.” He describes *government* as the structure by which power operates within and through hierarchy and bureaucracy, utilizing democratically elected representatives. He describes *governance* as the power structure that functions through a combination of formal private/public partnerships, informal social networks as well as what he calls “policy communities.” He characterizes *policy communities* as networks that function through decentralized, ambiguous, and less regulated private relationships within the public sector (p. 115). Members of such *policy communities* in education often include corporate philanthropists, wealthy individuals who work in finance, entrepreneurs, and popularly celebrated leaders in school reform. Instead of replacing established policy makers, such policy communities “circumvent and incorporate” or “overlay or extend beyond” them in the pursuit of realizing their wishes and producing desired effects (ibid.).

The following network analysis is concerned with *governance* (as Stephen Ball defines it) in the New York City charter school movement, focusing on local policy communities where educational policymaking is increasingly taking place. Our project was undertaken, in part, to better understand the composition and nature of these local policy communities or networks of the “power elite” (Wright-Mills, 1956; Domhoff, 2009) that are currently engaged in the governance of public schooling through charter schools. A key preliminary finding of our study is that many New York City charter school managers are not community-based individuals managing autonomous community-centered schools. Instead, they are members of a growing shadow community that is collectively gaining unprecedented influence and control over local schools.

Recent local and national news articles demonstrate that members of the power elite have a substantial presence in the charter school movement. The presence of these new, non-governmental players is dramatically shifting the power dynamics of educational policy-making. Researchers are left with the work of exposing these charter school networks and underscoring power elites’ unique opportunities for economic, political and social capital gain, while simultaneously dispossessing the public of their right to govern public schools.

The specific research questions guiding our research were:

1. To what extent do the “power elite” play a role in New York City’s charter school movement?
2. What individuals and networks constitute the “policy communities” involved in the proliferation of charter schools in New York City?
3. What are the vested interests of power elites participating in the New York City charter school movement?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Charter school policy has most commonly been referred to as a neoliberal reform. David Harvey (2007) provides an important distinction between the political-

economic theory of neoliberalism and the actual practice of *neoliberalization*. He defines neoliberalism as a theory originating in the late 1960s that asserts that

human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade [wherein t]he role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (pp. 2)

Those who align themselves with neoliberal theory believe that their political ideals of freedom and dignity, and social ideal of the elimination of poverty, will only be realized through the freedom of the market and trade. Importantly, neoliberalism holds that individual freedom requires not only deregulation of the market but also deregulation of individual human life, with each individual personally responsible for his or her own well being, thus forsaking the right to hold the state accountable for such matters.

While this theory may rhetorically advance freedom and human dignity, Harvey argues that it is actually used to veil the more exploitative aspect of neoliberalization—a process he defines as both an act of creative destruction and the restoration or reconstruction of the power of economic elites. Since the 1970s, economic elites in the U.S. have used neoliberalization as a tool to regain once threatened economic and political capital through the economic process of “accumulation by dispossession.” The process of accumulation by dispossession is characterized by:

- transfer of assets from public and popular to private and class privileged domains;
- speculative and predatory financialization;
- management and manipulation of crisis; and
- redistribution of state capital from the working classes to the upper classes (Harvey, 2007, pp. 160).

Charter school policy is neoliberal in the sense that private management of charter schools represents the deregulation and marketization of public education and rearticulates the role of democratically elected government from accountable regulator to purveyor and vendor of services. It also redefines the role of parents from collectivist citizens and communities to individualistic consumers. Control of state capital may also be transferred to upper classes through per-pupil funding, which follows each student into charter schools with deregulated budgets.

One common and controversial way this transfer of assets and redistribution of capital operates in the New York City charter school movement is through changes in the control and management of physical school property. Success Charter Network charter schools and PAVE Academy have recently taken over classroom space in existing public schools despite the resistance of the public school staff or parents (Cramer, 2010; Gonzalez, 2010c). Former Chancellor Joel Klein in both cases facilitated the charter school takeover of public school space. Furthermore, the city and state have allocated public money to fund the construction of new charter school buildings, some of which

are being built by Civic Builders, Inc., a focus of one power map, below (Gonzalez, 2010b).

We view the infiltration of neoliberal policy and organizations via charter schools through the lens of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top as well as city-level rhetoric and policies. In relation to this, Naomi Klein's concept of disaster capitalism (2008) has helped us frame the speculative and predatory aspect of this education reform, which is dependent upon the assertion that our public schools are in a state of crisis. While NCLB provides a means for the state to *prove* that schools across the city are in a state of disaster, the New York City DOE rushes to close them without due process. Waiting in the wings to scoop up the facilities or reorganize them as charters, the DOE makes use of alleged *community-grown organizations* that are comprised of the wealthy and politically connected (Shatzky, 2010; Dillon, 2010). Combined, these conditions serve to keep administrators, teachers and families in a constant state of fear about whether their teaching and test scores will deem their schools *failures* and move them onto the growing list of Schools in Need of Improvement/Schools Under Registration Review.

Two scholars have recently begun the important work of highlighting the emergence of governance in educational policy-making by detailing the networks of individuals and organizations participating in educational policy communities.

As we alluded to above, Stephen J. Ball (2007) examines the privatization of British educational systems through the methodological frames of discourse analysis, structural frameworks, the changing relationship of the state to education, and the interactions of individuals who represent new actors in "entrepreneurial governance," all of which are at play in the charter school movement in New York City (p. 11).

Ball examines the diverse and often obscure conditions within the "education services industry," through which much privatization is occurring. Reform efforts targeting the public sector, in general, and education specifically provide many of the inroads for profit makers. In addition to some of the more traditional partnerships and outsourcing arrangements such as school meals or transportation, Ball highlights the emerging role of school change management consultancies that operate because of and within webs of powerful networks of politicians and industry leaders; capital projects that ultimately blur the lines between public and private sector financing, labor and ownership; and a rise in acquisitions and mergers as well as secondary markets.

In addition, Ball examines the roles of key consultants, contractors and educational entrepreneurs. He argues that the education services industry (ESI) has risen from carefully crafted policy-making and market relations, not from traditional market forces such as consumer demand. ESI entrepreneurs are often former public sector workers who take their specialized knowledge and contacts into the private sector where they join with existing business networks to generate policy and grow new markets. Ball looks at all of these actors within their "policy communities," which are "integrated, stable and exclusive policy networks" (p 115) that increase access by business interests and simultaneously guide policy. He is particularly interested in those policy community agents who "occupy multiple positions" and "join things up" (p. 129). Although Ball's work focuses primarily on education in the United Kingdom, which leads

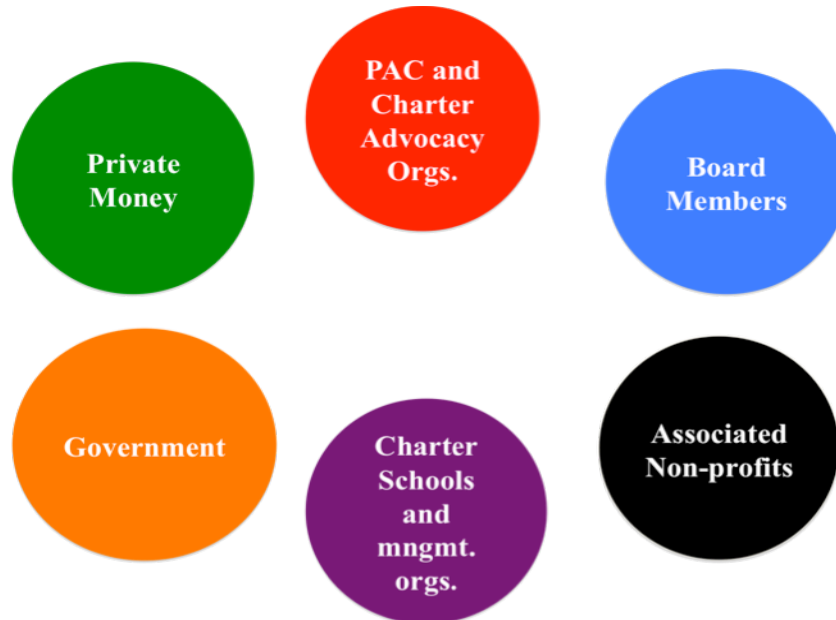
the U.S. in terms of privatization, his analysis is relevant and even prescient when applied to New York City's relatively new charter school movement. Below, our three power maps tell similar stories, not only about the networks of business, former public sector workers, and education entrepreneurs, but also about those individuals whose influence is synergistic across the charter school movement.

In a similar vein, Patricia Burch (2009) is concerned with what she labels "the new privatization" of education in the U.S., wherein she describes a "relatively opaque" and complex web of contractors and subcontractors who have been provided inroads into local educational markets under the auspices of No Child Left Behind. Burch details the expanding influence of this network of "formal organizations such as associations, research firms, and investors" who act as "carriers of the new privatization and as intermediaries in the blurring of boundaries between markets and education policy" (p. 39). Importantly, Burch focuses on the "revolving door" in educational policy created by former department officials involved in the design of NCLB who have moved to positions in the private education contracting organizations such as Chartwell Education Group, Dutko Worldwide, and Knowledge Universe (pp. 42-45). In addition, Burch illustrates the networks existing within the Education Industry Association; "hybrid organizations" that constitute a "cross between an investment firm and traditional philanthropy," such as the New Schools Venture Fund; and research firms such as Eduventures. Burch urges policy researchers to think of this "new privatization" as a "single field" in order to better see the "connections and tensions between apparently separate entities...whose interactions are critical to what happens in K-12 education" (p. 53).

### **Methodology**

This article seeks to analyze the inner workings of New York City's charter school movement by using a network analysis of three charter school organizations: PAVE Charter School, Success Charter Network, Inc., and Civic Builders, Inc. The task of demonstrating that a policy community of the power elite exists within the New York City charter school movement was approached using "membership network analysis"—wherein the connections among and/or between those assumed to constitute the powerful group or class are identified using both organizational and interpersonal "membership networks" (Domhoff, 2009). For the purposes of this project, we employ Domhoff's (2005) definition of power as a collectivity's ability to realize wishes and produce desired effects that can be measured by a series of indicators, or signs, that bear a probabilistic relationship to power. According to Domhoff, if a group is powerful it must have both the capacity to realize its common goals, or collective power, and the ability of the group to realize its own goals despite resistance of others, or what he refers to as distributive power.

These networks were illustrated by what we refer to below as "power maps," visuals that display the connections between powerful people and organizations related to charter school reform. This illustration was then followed by an analysis of the "links," or what are referred to as "kinship ties," which illustrate the size and direction of money flows between people and institutions. The colors represent the types of organizations or individuals identified in each of the following power maps.



The data collected for this analysis include an extensive collection of relevant newspaper articles, charter school organization websites, and 990 tax forms for non-profit organizations using GuideStar (<http://www2.guidestar.org/Home.aspx>).

## **Findings**

### Pave Academy Charter School

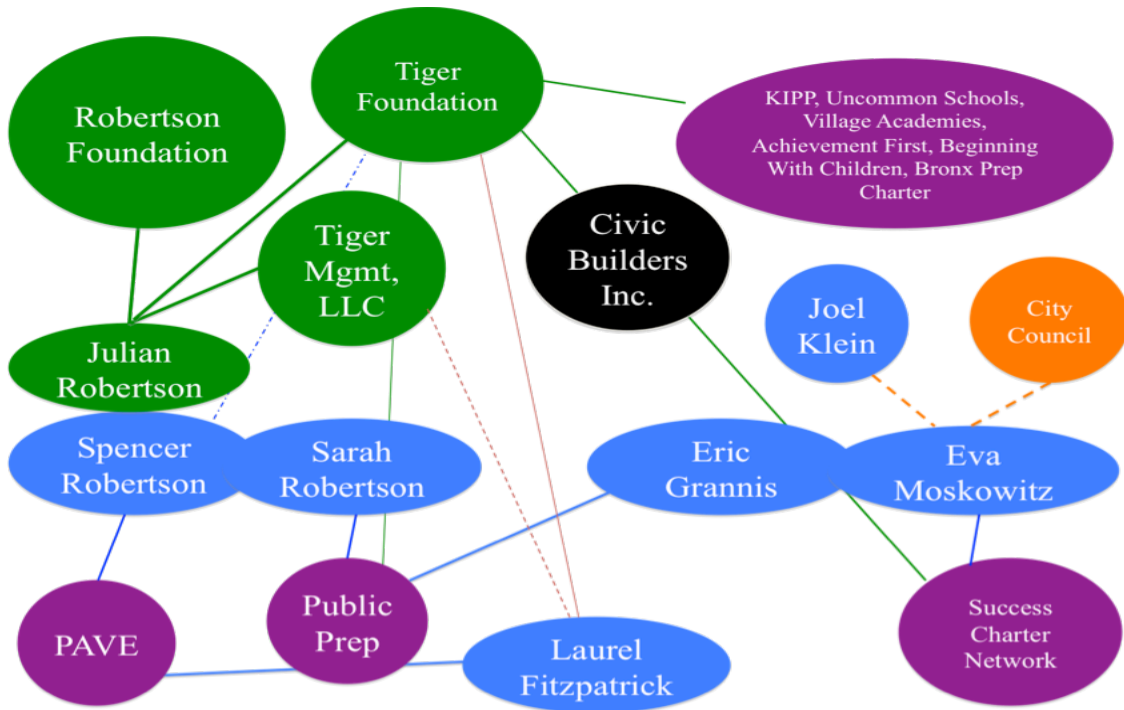
In 2008, PAVE Academy Charter School opened its figurative doors within the already existing PS 15 in Red Hook, Brooklyn, a school named after Patrick F. Daly, a former principal who lost his life in 1992 when he was caught in gunfire in the school's surrounding neighborhood. One of over 70 public school buildings forced to share space with a charter school in New York City, PS 15 was not a school in need of "turnaround" when PAVE was allowed to collocate within its building. PS 15 received an "A" rating three years in a row<sup>1</sup> and a Closing the Gap achievement award for its work in raising the performance of its students (New York City DOE, 2007; Murphy, 2010). While the mandated co-location of PAVE within PS 15 was supposed to be a temporary use of DOE's determination of PS 15's underutilized space, PAVE failed to secure a private location by the two-year deadline (Brown, 2009).

PS 15 parents and teachers have vehemently opposed the initial and continuing school co-location. Recently, the leader of PS 15's Parents Association publicly accused PAVE of 'arrogance' due to its insistence on "separate entrances, stairwells and even bathrooms for their students" as well as for "discourag[ing] their children from talking to ours" (ibid, 2). In December, 2009, PS 15's PTA called an emergency meeting after the New York City released a statement declaring PS 15 capable of accommodating PAVE's planned K-7 students over five years. Parents at this meeting complained that their school was being 'targeted for termination' and that New York City DOE had misrepresented the two-year limit and purposefully planned to hold the public hearing

on the issue in another borough (ibid). That same month Wally Bazemore, member of the PAVE board of directors, publicly announced that PAVE received \$26 million of the \$250 million allocated by the New York City DOE for the support and development of new charter school communities, in addition to \$6.2 million privately, leaving the board to raise only \$6 million more in order to have full funding for a new school building. In summer, 2010, former New York State Education Commissioner David Steiner declined to intervene in the City’s proposal to expand PAVE Academy within P.S. 15, allowing it to stay and expand within the school for three more years.

As researchers concerned with neoliberal policy, we wonder how is it that an academically successful public school with an active PTA was forced to share its public facilities with this charter school despite strong resistance from PS 15 parents. The following power map illustrates the organizational and interpersonal networks behind PAVE, and demonstrates how this hotly contested act of school governance may have been realized.

**PAVE Academy Charter School**



This power map illustrates the policy community that exists with PAVE at its center. Spencer Robertson is married to Sarah Robertson, who is the chairwoman of the Girls Preparatory Charter School board, a charter school located in New York City’s Lower East Side that is also controversially co-located within an existing public school. Another member of the Girls Prep board is Eric Grannis, husband of Eva Moskowitz, the founder and director of Success Charter Network, Inc. PAVE is connected to Success Charter Network through the interpersonal relations across three of its schools and PAVE, Girls Prep and the Success Charter Network are all Tiger Foundation grantees. In other words,



the above “membership network” of power elites in New York City’s charter school movement is connected across boards and access to government officials and private funding. Moreover, each of these charter schools is embroiled in contests over access to and expansion in public facilities that already house public schools.

The short history of PAVE Academy’s heated relations with PS 15 serves as an example of David Harvey’s notion of accumulation by dispossession. The fight over public space in PS 15 is an apt example of the transfer of assets from public and popular to private and class privileged domains, as well as the redistribution of state capital from the lower classes to the upper classes (Harvey, 2007). Spencer Robertson, the founder and executive director of PAVE, is the son of billionaire Julian Robertson, who is the founder and Chairman of Tiger Management LLC, a New York City hedge fund; as well as a contributor of more than \$10 million to NYCDOE’s educational projects, \$6.75 million to the New York City Charter School Center and \$3.25 million to the Fund for Public Schools, a nonprofit that raises money for schools. As well, Robertson founded the Robertson and Tiger Foundations, both of which support the charter school movement.

#### Success Charter Network, Inc.

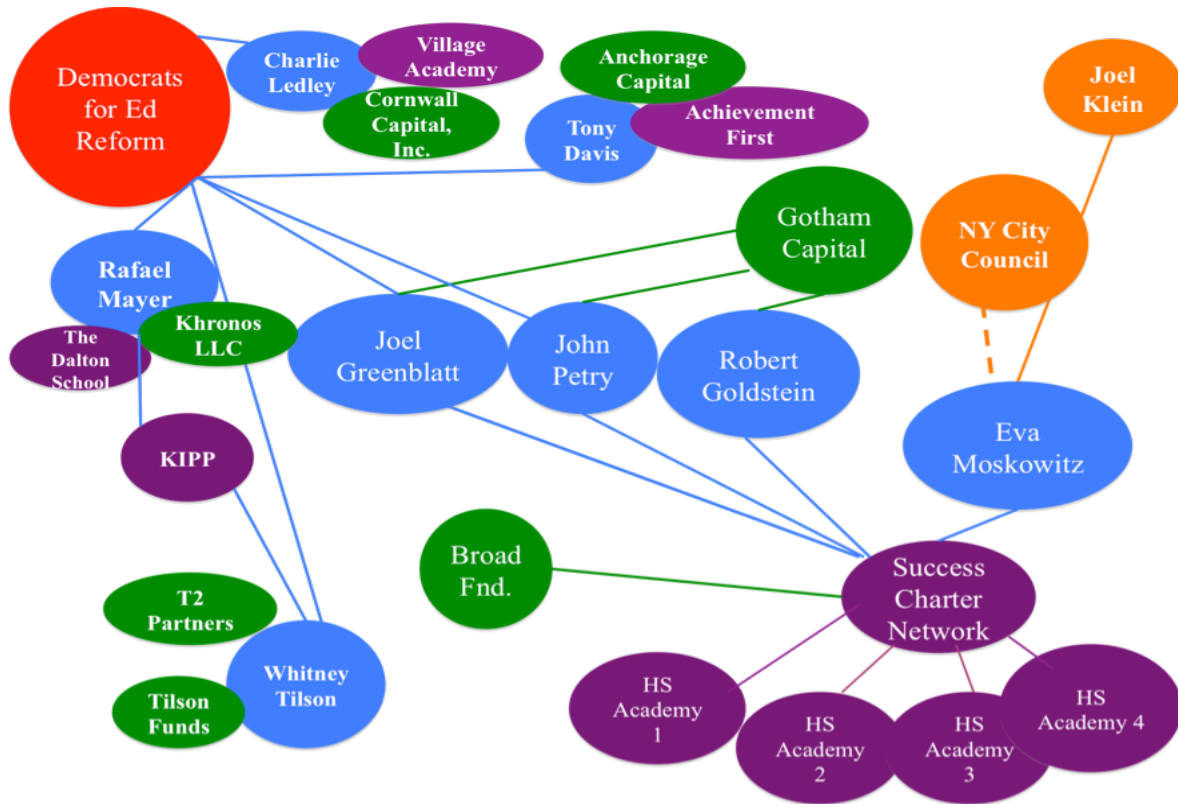
Former City Council member Eva Moskowitz is the founder of Success Charter Network, Inc. (SCN), which manages the four Harlem Success Academies. Success Charter Network board members include Joel Greenblatt, Rob Goldstein and John Petry, all of whom are part of the New York City hedge-fund Gotham Capital and are generous supporters and board members of the Democrats for Educational Reform, a political action committee determined to “influence the political power structure” within the national Democratic party. SCN opened Harlem Success Academy 1 in 2006, with charters 2, 3, and 4 opened in 2008. Eva Moskowitz has been publicly questioned about her generous salaries of \$371,000 in 2006-2007 and \$310,000 in 2007-2008 (Gonzalez, 2009) as well as her unprecedented access and connection to Chancellor Klein (Gonzalez, 2009; 2010).

Like PAVE Academy, the Harlem Success Academies have also been part of contentious debates about co-locating in existing public school buildings. In February 2009, the New York City DOE announced the closure of PS 241 in West Harlem and informed District 3’s Community Education Council (CEC) that that Harlem Success Academy 4 would move into the school building for the 2009-10 school year. Success Charter Network bused more than 500 Harlem Success Academy parents to a public hearing on the takeover, but their actions spurred parent and community resistance, culminating in a lawsuit filed by the United Federation of Teachers and New York Civil Liberties Union claiming that state law requires zoning changes to be approved by local CECs. New York City DOE subsequently decided to allow PS 241 and several other schools to stay open, but forced them to co-locate with Harlem Success charter schools (Cramer & Green, 2009; Hernandez, 2009).

We have some questions that result from the process of unmasking these relationships. Why are hedge-fund managers involved in charter school management? How was Success Charter Network able to open three schools in one year and take over public facilities despite resistance from the existing school communities? The power

map that follows is intended to illustrate what Burch refers to as the “revolving door” of new privatization as well as the influence that individuals associated with Success Charter Network have on local and national public school governance and policymaking.

**Success Charter Network, Inc.**



Eva Moskowitz, as a former New York City Council member, has strong political leverage in New York City. Her uniquely close connection to former Schools Chancellor Joel Klein demonstrates just what this leverage translates into in terms of growing her charter schools. In addition to personal appearances at Harlem Success events and fundraisers, Chancellor Klein has made himself readily available to Moskowitz via e-mail to help her solicit private foundation funding and settle disputes over school space. This is clearly a reciprocal arrangement, since e-mails obtained by the *New York Daily News* also demonstrate that Moskowitz was willing to rally “armies” of parents to support the current administration’s pro-charter school policies (Gonzalez, 2010b).

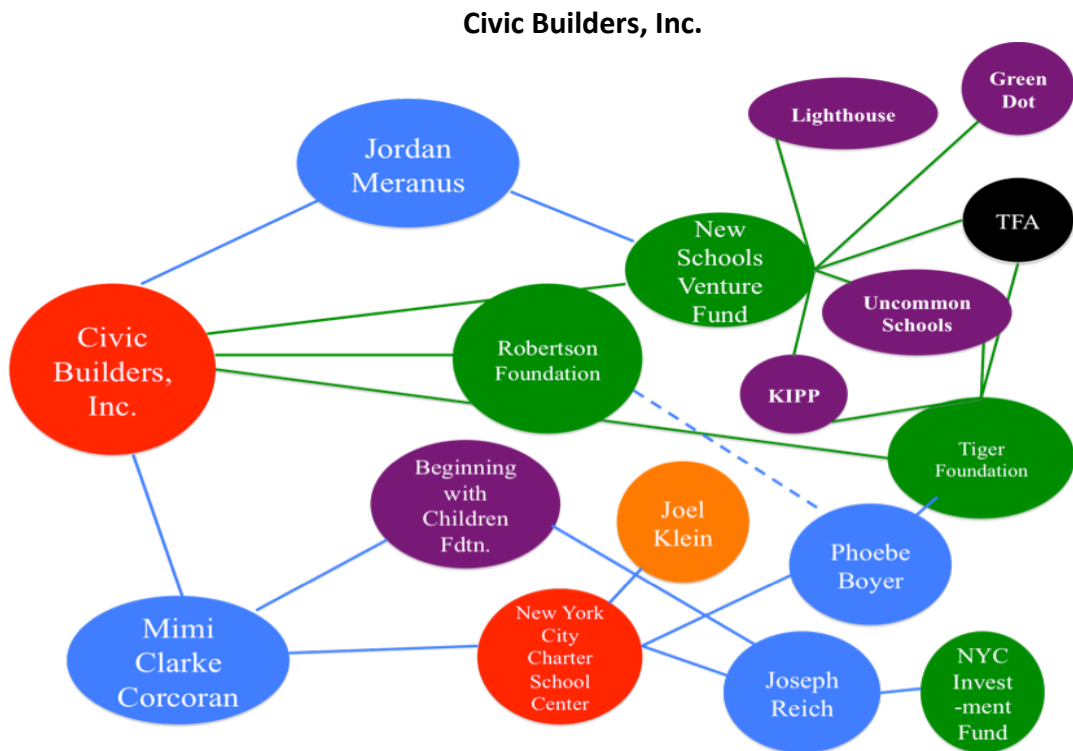
SCN board members Joel Greenblatt and John Petry are two of six board members of the Democrats for Education Reform (DFER). Their roles have made them individually as well as the SCN organization powerful, yet they are unaccountable to the public at both the local and national levels because they are operating from the private sector. DFER is a clear example of the Democratic Party’s growing allegiance to a neoliberal agenda. The organization supports the expansion of charter schools and the closure of “failing” schools, school vouchers, mayoral control, market-based reform and

national standards. In terms of networks within networks, while the power map above could not document every connection in this pervasive network, note that DFER is related to Education Reform Now, Inc. a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in New York, which is, in turn, connected to Education Reform Now Advocacy Committee, Inc., a 501(c)4 or non-profit organization that engages in lobbying and political campaigning. John Petry is also connected to both organizations. Philanthropist and educational entrepreneur Eli Broad's recent donation of \$1 million dollars to SCN is further evidence of SCN's growing power on a national scale.

These facts led us to wonder whether SCN might represent an example of our theoretical concept, accumulation by dispossession? Like PAVE Academy, we see that SCN has been successful in the transfer of public assets and redistribution of state capital, through per-pupil funding and takeover of public school facilities, into the private and privileged domains. In addition to this, we see an example of the production and manipulation of what Naomi Klein would call an educational "crisis," by Chancellor Klein in his pro-charter actions with PS 241, despite the resistance of the existing school community.

Civic Builders, Inc.

As the PAVE and SCN examples demonstrate, facilities are a major point of contention in the New York City charter school movement. Capitalizing on this challenge of securing space for charter schools, Civic Builders, Inc., a "nonprofit facilities developer that provides turnkey real estate solutions for high-performing charter schools," is the focus of the third power map (<http://www.civicbuilders.org/>).



Despite a hefty investment of public monies in Civic Builders by New York City DOE—\$150 million as of 2008—the charters and DOE do not own the facilities constructed by Civic Builders. The charters *lease* the spaces and Civic Builders maintains ownership and collects the profit (<http://www.fastcompany.com/social/2008/profiles/civic-builders.html>). The organization refers to this questionable process as “de-linking” real estate and educational investments, but it is clear that public funds are supporting quasi-private investment. As mentioned above, the relinquishment of the responsibility for and ownership of public school facilities is one key example of the new neoliberal, privatizing relationship between the state and public education.

Civic Builders’ 2007 tax forms show that millions of dollars were paid to high-priced consultants in areas such as architecture and general contracting, a type of outsourcing to private firms that in similar cases has been shown to not be carefully monitored (see NYSUT, 2010). In addition, most of Civic Builders’ board members have explicit ties to financial services and/or commercial real estate, increasing the likelihood of potential conflicts of interest and necessitating ongoing monitoring on the part of the public sector.

The Civic Builders team has compiled several policy papers on topics ranging from “The Power of GIS Mapping” to “The Economic Impact of New Charter Schools,” all of which are available on their website. Our reading of these reports leads us to believe that Civic Builders is essentially justifying its existence as a new niche market for public dollars through the use of sophisticated public relations documents couched as policy papers.

A recent newspaper article demonstrates the potential for private gain and public suffering. By taking advantage of the New Markets Tax Credit, one non-profit, the Brighter Choice Foundation, organized substantial financial returns for private investors through real estate transactions that, in some cases, tripled the rent paid by charter schools in Albany, New York (Gonzalez, 2010a). These transactions further illustrate the inherent dangers of opening up the public coffers to the free market. Brighter Choice Foundation’s vice chairman not only co-authored New York State’s charter law and serves on the board of three of the charter schools that “took advantage” of the funding and are now strapped with exorbitant rents, but he also sits on the board of directors of NCB Capital Impact, which used the New Market Credits and coordinated the loans (ibid).

## **Conclusions**

Whether New York City’s hedge fund managers are citing charters as the “civil rights struggle of our time” or the city’s Mayor is reducing a complex legislative debate about increasing the charter cap to the simplistic question of why the city cannot “approve the schools and have the kind of schools that the parents want,” the “discourse of reform” that Ball cites is clearly at work (Hass, 2009; Grossman, 2010).

With this new type of education reform, New York State and the New York City Department of Education are increasingly relegated to being the brokers of education, another feature of Ball’s assessment of privatization movement. We believe the above analysis indicates that the agencies that are charged by the public trust with governance

of public education services and facilities are several steps removed from their public responsibilities, due increasingly to their enthusiastic support of charters and the wealthy. Our efforts have been focused on better understanding connections among the wealthy and powerful individuals who are influencing public education (we were not able to ascertain how much less the financiers pay in taxes as a result of their education spending on charters). As evidenced by the PAVE and Success Charter Network power maps, these new players on the educational field are members of power networks in policy communities—the flesh and bones of the structures that researchers of educational policy such as Ball and Burch examine.

This network analysis of three New York City charter school organizations provides evidence that a local policy community of power elites does exist within, between, and beyond these three organizations, and that these networks have a substantial role in the governance of public schooling at local and national levels. The overrepresentation of corporate elites in each of the three charter school organizations analyzed here suggests that members of New York City's power elite may have disproportionate access to governance of charter schools and existing public school facilities.

We began this study by asking the following question: Why is it problematic that a network of power elites is increasingly involved in the governance of public schooling? Following our research, we conclude that the explicit purpose of the New York State Charter School Act of 1998 and the needs or desires of the general public are being sidelined when business interests crowd out those of parents, community members, and teachers. Over the long-term, the involvement of so many entrepreneurial individuals, organizations, and investors within and around the charter school movement generates the potential for a significant shift of public funds to private hands.

Charter school expansion is often referred to in popular media as the civil rights struggle of our time. The phrase is indicative of the understandable sense of urgency many feel when considering current public schools (Hass, 2009). But the PAVE, SCN and Civic Builders power maps illustrate that the basic civil rights of access and control of the public coffers and facilities and representation by a democratically elected and accountable government are weakened by the infiltration of the private sector into educational governance. Most importantly, this privatization is in direct opposition to the original intent of the NYS Charter School Act of 1998, a policy that promised to deregulate management of schools in order to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools.

In closing, we urge that concerned members of the public critically consider whom society wants involved in the governance of public schools. The NYS Charter School Act of 1998 ultimately encouraged the growth of powerful policy communities who are involved in the management of low-income minority schools, the takeover of public facilities, and major shifts in educational policy such as *Race to the Top* mandates that American society is now witnessing at the federal, state and local levels. Educational researchers must continue to track and evaluate institutional changes caused by the introduction of these new, powerful non-governmental players to the

field whose presence has dramatically shifted the power dynamics of educational policy-making.

In closing, many powerful New York City charter school managers are not random and disconnected individuals managing autonomous community-grown organizations; they are members of a growing policy community that is dispossessing the public's influence and control over educational policymaking. The educational community must continue to document their expansion and interconnectedness in order to hold these emerging private networks accountable to the public.

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