# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SATISFACTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HIGH-SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOLS AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2022

# ABSTRACT

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2022

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The purpose of this study is to examine parents' levels of satisfaction with school choice by comparing charter and traditional public schools at the secondary level. The main assumption of the study is that parental satisfaction with school choice is related to parental involvement with children's education and their views of school-home communication. The study is guided by Bourdieu's theory of capital to interpret parental involvement efforts and their assessment of school-home communication as ways to acquire social capital for themselves and their children. Epstein's framework of parental involvement allows for operationalizing the concept with respect to school and out-of-school activities supporting children's education. The results indicate that charter school parents are more ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse when compared to traditional public-school parents, while less educated, less affluent, and less likely to be homeowners. However, charter school parents are more involved and more satisfied with their child's school. Furthermore, the study found that the most important predictor of parents' satisfaction is their positive assessment of school-home communication.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed this research without the guidance and assistance of my committee. First, I sincerely thank Dr. Maria Trache for being my dissertation chair, teacher, and mentor and for all of the time and effort she spent with me on this process. Dr. Trache was helpful and encouraging while guiding me to become a better student and writer. I would also like to thank Dr. Barbara Tobolowsky and Dr. Leaf Zhang for their advice and assistance. They were wonderful teachers during my coursework and great supporters throughout my dissertation. I will forever be indebted to them for the dedication and assistance they provided.

In addition to my dissertation committee, my family, friends, and God aided me through this dissertation journey. My mother, who from birth has been my greatest cheerleader and continues to be the most influential person in my life. I dedicate this dissertation to her. She has always believed I could do anything I set my mind to and had to remind me a lot throughout this process. My extended family supported and prayed so much for me throughout this endeavor. My friends helped me tremendously cross this finish line; they motivated me and kept me encouraged. Above all, on those sleepless nights when it felt like deadlines were on top of deadlines, it was nothing but God that brought me through.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of charter schools was preceded by the release of *A Nation at Risk* report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report painted a vivid picture of the grim state of education in the United States, stating that other nations were making their way ahead of the U.S. in industry, technology, and science (Marshall, 2017). Education was identified as vital to ensuring the United States continued to be the world leader in terms of technology and innovation. Still, over the past 40 years, the U.S. has gone from leading world education to being 9th in literacy, 31st in mathematics, and 12th in science for students tested at age 15 (National Centre for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020).

Moreover, an effective K-12 education has long-term implications. A national longitudinal study of U. S. high school students first surveyed in 1960 showed that school behaviors and attitudes predict long-term life outcomes for up to at least 50 years after the first survey (Spengler & Roberts, 2018). Long-term outcomes include educational attainment and occupational success (e.g., occupational prestige, income) measured 11 and 50 years after high-school graduation. Having interest in school, demonstrating maturity and responsibility, and certainly possessing good reading and writing skills had positive impacts on outcomes (Spengler & Roberts, 2018). In turn, education and income were found to positively affect the emotional well-being of adults, although the effect was more pronounced for White adults (Assari et al., 2018). Educated adults are also more socially motivated and have a higher sense of civic duty (Hansen & Tyner, 2019). Therefore, academic achievement and behaviors during high school have long term educational, economic, and life-course impacts.

As a result, it is no surprise most parents are concerned about their child's education and want to have the opportunity to choose the school their child attends. Many are frustrated about having their children assigned to public schools according to where they live (Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Wang et al., 2019). This is one reason *school choice* has become one of the most debated topics in education and continues to be of interest in the media and policy outlets (e.g., AP News, 2022; Chen, 2020; Education Week, n.d.). School choice refers to a wide range of programs offering students and their families voluntary alternatives to traditional public schooling (Marshall, 2017; Potterton, 2019). It includes traditional public, charter, magnet, and private schools, as well as homeschool (Finnigan et al., 2004; Place & Gleason, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2003; Wang et al., 2019). Since *A Nation at Risk report* was published, school choice has been seen as a potential solution to the problem of public schools failing students and parents in the United States (Chubb & Moe, 1991).

The push for school choice was further emphasized after the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In particular, the law included components supporting the growth of charter schools, funded certain services for private school students, and incorporated protections for homeschooling parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Later on, in 2015, *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) provided more funding for charter school start-up grants, further emphasizing the expansion of this type of public school (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). There has also been support for charter school expansion by the last three U.S. presidents, Trump, Obama, and Bush (Cheng & Peterson, 2017). Miguel Cardona, the 12$^{th}$ United States Secretary of Education in the current administration, is a former public-school teacher and principal who acted as a charter school authorizer when he was the Connecticut Commissioner of Education.

Of all school programs, charter schools have expanded at a most rapid rate in the past 20 years (Place & Gleason, 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Between the 2004-2005 and the 2018-2019 school years, the number of reported charter schools in the U.S. rose by 3,400 schools (Forman, 2004; Forman, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). Additionally, NCES reports show that in 2018-2019, there were 3.3 million students in charter schools throughout the U.S., which represented an increase of 1.7 million students in 10 years. According to Place and Gleason (2019), the increase cannot be solely attributed to better educational outcomes in charter schools because research shows inconsistency in student achievement when comparing charter schools and traditional public schools (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Booker et al., 2007; Hoxby et al., 2009; Marshall, 2017). Other studies point to the connection between school and home as a critical component to a child's academic success (Brody et al., 1995; Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Epstein, 1995) that further leads to parent satisfaction with a school (Crosby et al., 2015; Elias et al., 2007). School-home partnerships in charter schools also appear to create more disciplined learning environments for students and strengthen parental involvement (Epstein, 1995; Smith et al., 2011; Stetson, 2013). Given the continued expansion of the charter school network, it is possible that parents' satisfaction with their children's education may extend beyond student achievement outcomes as criteria for electing to send their children to charter schools (Barrow et al., 2017; Friedman et al., 2007; Gleason et al., 2010).

Therefore, my research is based on the assumption that an understanding of the rapid growth of charter schools can be also gained by examining parents' experiences with their children's charter schools. As indicated by Friedman et al. (2007), "The relationship between parent satisfaction with their children's school and school choice seems intuitively obvious…"

(p.278) as an explanation for why an increasing number of families are choosing charter over traditional public schools.

Equally, if parents are more satisfied with their child's school, they, in turn, will also be more involved with their child's education, and if they are more involved with their child's education, the student will have better educational outcomes (Crosby et al., 2015; Elias et al., 2007). Therefore, a relationship can be established between parental satisfaction, parents' involvement with school and student academic success that could justify parents' school choice decisions. Although many studies have focused on student outcomes as a factor affecting school choice, and/or have compared public versus private options (Maul, 2013; Zimmer et al., 2012), less research has focused on parents' involvement and satisfaction as determinants of school choice with a focus on charter schools (Hamlin & Cheng, 2019).

## Problem statement

School choice continues to be one of the most debated topics in K-12 education in the United States. Various school choice programs are open to students and families who voluntarily select alternative schooling options to enrolling in the family residence's assigned public schools (Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Place & Gleason, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). Charter schools, which have grown over the past 30 years, represent a popular public education alternative (NCES, 2019; Place & Gleason, 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Some argue that parents' charter school decisions are related to location, presumption of autonomy and innovativeness, marketing, and demographics (Oberfield 2016; Potterton, 2019). Other studies focused on student outcomes in charter schools but did not produce conclusive explanations on the growth of the charter school system (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Booker et al., 2007; Hoxby et al., 2009; Marshall, 2017). Yet, existing research suggests a relationship between parents'

satisfaction with school choice, their involvement with children's education, and student outcomes (Friedman et al., 2007). Therefore, more studies are needed to examine parents' level of satisfaction with their children's education in charter and traditional public schools, while simultaneously determining whether the parent's level of satisfaction is related to higher level of parental involvement or effective home-school partnerships (Brody et al., 1995; Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Epstein, 1995).

## Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the current study is to examine and compare parents' levels of satisfaction for those who have children in charter versus traditional public schools at the secondary level; and, whether their level of satisfaction with school is related to higher levels of parental involvement and stronger home-school communication. The study is based on secondary analysis of data from the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) on Parent and Family Involvement (PFI) in Education (McQuiggan & Megra, 2017). The study will address the following three research questions:

1. Are there any socio-demographic differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, education, home ownership, income) between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students?
2. Are there differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students with respect to levels of satisfaction with school, assessment of school-home communication, and involvement in school events and out-of-school activities?
3. To what extent do school choice, parents' characteristics, involvement with school events and out-of-school activities, and assessment of school-home communication contribute to the overall level of parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children?

## Method

The study used data from the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) on Parent and Family Involvement in Education (PFI) to examine if parents of traditional public-school students and parents of charter school students have different levels of satisfaction with their children's school. Variables for parent involvement in school activities, assessment of school-home communication and parent satisfaction will be derived from the survey questions. The parent's demographic variables will be also included in the analyses. The analyses will include descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, ANOVA tests, and multiple linear regression analyses, and they will be conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.

## Theoretical Framework

The main assumption of the study is that parents' satisfaction with their children's school is determined by their involvement in their children's education, which manifested through the initial choice of school, and continued with parent's school involvement; and this involvement is an investment that builds the child's cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Through involvement, parents acquire knowledge about school, teachers, academic opportunities, and social networks that help them make better decisions for their children. They also transfer this knowledge to children in the form of cultural capital that consists of an understanding of the educational system (e.g., use of books, computers) and dispositions and attitudes toward schooling (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

In addition, parents gain social capital by visiting schools to obtain information, access resources, or interact with other parents and school personnel (Coleman, 1988; Lee & Bowen, 2006), which is beneficial to their children's academic achievement. Similarly, Bourdieu's notion of social capital describes how social relationships and networks facilitate students'

access to resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Lareau (2001) discussed the role played by social background in building family-school relationships and defining the parents' involvement with school. The notions of cultural and social capital will guide the discussion of parental involvement in this study. The continual accumulation of capital by parents adds up to the capital they already possess through their own education and is transferred to their children.

To operationalize some of these concepts, I use Epstein's (1995) model that identifies elements of parental involvement. In addition, the concept of parental satisfaction is based on Friedman et al. (2007), who developed a conceptual model of parent satisfaction. The parent satisfaction model describes school-related factors parents find important when evaluating their children's school (Friedman et al., 2007). Guided by these concepts, I developed an analytical framework for my study to include parents' individual, home and school-related factors hypothesized to affect parents' level of satisfaction with their child's schooling.

## Researcher Standpoint

I am a graduate of a traditional public school, and my mother was a private school teacher, but none of my interest in this research topic comes from my experience as a student or through a family channel. Rather, I spent seven years teaching in a traditional public school, and I am currently in my first year as a school administrator for a traditional public school. As such, I have strong beliefs in the ability of public education to adjust to the needs and expectations of students and their families.

Still, I have seen what the emphasis on competition and ratings has done to traditional public schools. It caused some positive changes, such as a focus on foreign languages and leadership. However, I have also seen the negative side; there are only a certain number of hours when students are in the building every day, and having too many elective courses gives students

less time to spend on foundational subjects, which can result in parents often feeling their children are not getting the adequate education from their neighborhood public schools. Charter schools are one example of how public education attempts to respond to these demands by offering alternative academic and social environments to engage students and families.

What sparked my interest in comparing traditional public schools and charter schools was my experience as a teacher. I noticed that some of the best and brightest students tend to move from traditional to charter schools. I would often not have the opportunity to see the students again to get an understanding of how things were progressing at their charter schools. However, on one occasion, a fourth-grade student of mine went to a charter school in fifth grade but returned to the traditional school in sixth grade. I did have an opportunity to speak to her mother about her return, and she stated the charter school had not provided what it advertised. She was disappointed that the teacher-to-student ratio seemed higher than in traditional public schools, and teachers did not actually know their students well. Of course, isolated stories cannot be used to draw any conclusion about the effectiveness of a school system. I continue to be puzzled by the question because charter schools are praised for creating a stimulating and caring environment for students, and I would like to better understand if parents value this approach.

Additionally, as a graduate student, I began to think more critically about the academic interest and personal development of the individual student and the scope of education as a whole. Through some of my graduate classes, my understanding of the constraints associated with traditional public schools were highlighted, and I began to understand the emerging need for something new. Something different is needed to address growing disparities within the country between social groups, along with the reality that the United States is falling further in

education on a global scale. As I have adopted my new role of an administrator, I aim to look at these issues through a broader lens.

I believe that focus on high school parents is particularly relevant. It is clear from the aforementioned study by Spengler and Roberts (2018) that high-school student behaviors and outcomes have long term life course effects. Given that students with more involved parents have better academic outcomes, it is imperative we focus more on parent involvement at the high-school level. If parents, especially those belonging to racial and ethnic minorities or those with a lower socioeconomic status, can help motivate and engage their children through their own partnership with school, there is a greater chance at closing achievement gaps. It is my passion and commitment to promoting equity in education that inspired me to research aspects related to high-school student achievement, which I have chosen to study through the lens of school choice and parental involvement and satisfaction.

Thus, in order to better understand parents' interest in and satisfaction with the charter school system, specifically during the four important years of high school, I choose to conduct quantitative research using national representative data to compare and contrast charter and traditional public schools from a parent perspective.

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it will demonstrate the importance of parental involvement in better understanding the educational resources children can access. Parents may understand the importance of becoming more involved instead of pulling their children from traditional public school. Parents may also gain an understanding about the connection between school satisfaction and involvement and realize what aspects could impact choice decisions about children's schooling. By showing that parental satisfaction and

involvement are related, the study will explain why involvement can become a source of cultural and social capital for children that could ultimately result in better achievement.

Second, the study used large-scale data to compare how these relationships differ for parents of students in traditional and charter public schools. The information is useful to policymakers and researchers to better understand in which type of school these relationships are more effective and lead to higher satisfaction for parents.

Third, the study is significant for school personnel and administrators to encourage the development of family-school relationships as promoters of student success. For school officials at the district level of traditional public schools, this knowledge could inform them how to best utilize resources to retain students. Rather than keeping up with the trendy practices charter schools promote, officials could focus on increasing parent and family involvement. Likewise, charter school administrators could use the information to place more emphasis on family involvement when recruiting.

Furthermore, lawmakers decide how to extend charters; they put limits and restrictions on the number of charter schools and determine charter school policies. It is incumbent to know if the now 30-year experiment of charter schools is increasing parental satisfaction with this type of school and if satisfaction is due to the charter school's program itself or more intrinsic to the parents' involvement with the school.

Finally, this study has a focus on just four years of schooling: high school. Because the literature demonstrates a decrease in parent involvement at the high school level, it is important to understand the ways in which parents are still participating in their child's learning at this level (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). It is perhaps even more important to understand what can be done to increase parent involvement at this level when

students make post-high-school decisions (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Considering there is a relationship between parent involvement and satisfaction, if it can be determined what the most significant predictors of parent satisfaction are, then that information can be used by high schools to boost parental satisfaction by increasing involvement, which, in turn, would positively affect student achievement.

## Definition of Terms

**Charter school:** Charter schools are publicly funded schools, which are created under charters or contracts and governed by a separate supervising body.

**Cultural capital**: Cultural capital is an inherited form of capital that exists in three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. Cultural capital is associated with parental education and transferred to children through personal dispositions and knowledge from experience, connections to education-related objects, and connections to education-related institutions.

**Parent involvement:** Parent involvement refers to the level to which parents are involved, engaged, or participate in their child's education. As suggested by Epstein (1995), involvement includes both school-centered and out-of-school participation with their child's learning.

**Parent satisfaction:** Satisfaction refers to the level to which parents are satisfied or content with their child's education and aspects of their child's school.

**School choice:** School choice refers to the legal right of parents to have the ability to choose the type of school their children attend. In this study, the term indicates the parent's specific choice in schooling for their child, either a charter or a traditional public high school.

**School-home communication:** School-home communication refers to the ways school maintains contact and sends information to parents about the student or school. It includes

various forms of school-home interaction. Though Epstein (1995) lists communication as a specific type of parent involvement, for the purposes of this study, school-home communication will be studied separately as an indicator of parents' assessment of the effectiveness of their interaction with schools.

**Social capital**: Social capital is the composite of actual and potential resources that can be accessed within a given social network. Social capital is gained through the relationships between people who are members of the social network.

**Traditional public school:** A traditional public school will refer to publicly funded neighborhood schools, regulated by the state, and often governed by independent school districts. Students' enrollment in public schools is based on their residency within the school district.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will first provide some background information about charter schools by defining and differentiating charter schools and other school types. Then, I will review research about factors that influence parents' school choice to provide context to the complex debate regarding school choice in the United States. I will cover a variety of topics about how parents make school choice decisions and how some of those identified reasons are controversial. I will then delineate research about parental involvement and parent satisfaction, which amongst all the other factors, stood out as most impactful. Finally, I will introduce the proposed theoretical framework for the study.

## Background on Charter Schools in the United States

### Definition

Charter schools are publicly funded and overseen by an organization under a contract, also known as a charter, with either a school district, the state, or another governing body (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Charter schools differ from traditional public schools that are governed by a school district, whereas charter schools can be run by school districts, private companies, colleges, and state agencies (Wang et al., 2019). Furthermore, one of the characteristics of charter schools is the lack of geographic boundaries often imposed by enrollment in traditional public schools. Generally, students can attend a charter school regardless of the physical distance between their home and school campus (Wang et al., 2019). This lack of geographical restrictions is closer to that of private schools; however, private schools are funded by private money and the U.S. Department of Education has limited restrictions on their religion and curriculum requirements (Wang et al., 2019).

## Origin

The first charter school laws were passed in 1991 in the state of Minnesota (Finnigan et al., 2004). The motivation behind this new type of educational system was to allow parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to have public schools outside of their local district's direct control in order to become more autonomous and innovative (Schroeder, 2004). Soon after, City Academy, the first United States charter school following these laws, was created and opened in 1992 in St. Paul, Minnesota. City Academy was less regulated by the state although publicly funded, non-discriminatory, and secular.

Federal funding for charter schools then began in 1995 with the Department of Education's authorization of the Public Charter Schools Program (PCSP). The PCSP funds cover grant programs, support charter school research, and other tasks pertaining to charter school programs (Finnigan et al., 2004). Nelson et al. (2000) wrote about funding being different depending on the state, with some states opting for a statewide average per-pupil funding, whereas other states used the per-pupil amount of the school district within which the charter school resides (Nelson et al., 2000).

## Autonomy and Innovativeness

The initial premise of charter schools was that students will receive a more autonomous and innovative education (Finnigan, 2007). Because charter schools do not have to follow all state guidelines as traditional public schools, parents assume that charter schools will have greater flexibility when it comes to educating their child.

Oberfield (2016) investigated teacher perceptions on creating a different learning environment through an analysis of the School and Staffing Survey developed by the National Center of Education Statistics, and found no significant difference in teacher autonomy in regard

to discipline, pedagogical techniques, and grading between charter schools and traditional public schools. However, charter school teachers did feel like they had more control over textbook and course content than traditional public-school teachers (Oberfield, 2016). Moreover, through a study researching innovativeness, Preston et al. (2012) determined that charter schools were less likely than their traditional public-school counterparts to be innovative which contradicts the original premise for their foundation.

In contrast, Flanders (2017) conducted research on data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, which provided information about school efficiency from 2012-2015. The charter schools were split into three types: instrumentality charter, non-instrumentality charter, and independent charter schools. Flanders determined the charter with the highest level of independence worked more efficiently than traditional public schools and more efficiently than the less independent charters, suggesting that charters with more independence may still offer that expected autonomy and innovation.

**Growth of Charter School System**

Since the beginning of charter schools in one state, the number of charter schools has increased, and laws governing charter schools have been passed in more than 40 states (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The number of charter schools and students attending those schools has increased over the past 20 years; from 1992 to 2014, 6,750 charter schools were established with 2.7 million students attending those schools.

As of 2016, traditional public schools have the majority of public-school student enrollment (94%), and charter schools have a smaller percentage (6%). However, the percent of change between 2000 and 2016 is drastically different for the two school types. At every charter school level (Pre-K-4$^{th}$ being elementary and 5$^{th}$-12$^{th}$ being secondary), the 2016 enrollment is

over five times the amount from 2000. These numbers indicate the significant growth the charter school sector experienced in recent years (Wang et al., 2019).

Since its inception, the increase of the charter school sector (U.S. Department of Education, 2017) has been pushed politically and has spread across America. Some of the reasons identified in research to explain the increase in parents' decision to enroll their children into charter school programs will be delineated in the next section.

## Family-Related Perspectives on School Choice

Since parents are a driving force for the expansion of the charter school system, it is important to understand their reasons to choose and to keep their children in the charter schools. In this section, I will address some of the factors considered by parents when making the choice to send their children to charter schools, which include geographical location and marketing tactics.

### Location

For families, charter school location plays a big role in opting to enroll their children. According to Bifulco and Buerger (2015), families are more likely to avoid a neighborhood school if they perceive it to be unsafe. This perception of danger is due, sometimes, to a school's neighborhood having a different racial composition than the family's own (Bifulco & Buerger, 2015).

The fact that families are deterred by a threat of danger could explain the policies and practices used by some charter schools to attract parents. A study conducted in Washington D.C. (Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002) found that some charter schools attempted to get higher performing and higher socioeconomic students to attend their charter schools. Most common was the process of attempting to prevent students with either disabilities or language differences from

attending their charter schools. In their study, the practice was referred to as “creaming” and “cropping,” whereas “creaming” was taking those highest performing students, and “cropping” was the process of not allowing the higher needs students into the charter school. Likewise, according to Jacobs (2013), who also conducted research in Washington D.C., the two predictors for charter school choice in the area were linguistic homogeneity and proximity, further illustrating why charters may use these practices.

Some scholars have also argued that there is a difference between mission-oriented and market-oriented charter schools, which heavily influences the locations of charter schools (Bifulco & Buerger, 2015). Mission-oriented charters are rooted in nonprofit social service and aim to serve disadvantaged populations, while market-oriented charters are linked to for-profit groups seeking to make money from opening the charter school. The aforementioned schools participating in creaming and cropping practices would fit into the market-oriented category.

However, according to LaFleur (2016), in Chicago, there are more charter schools near and just outside of areas with the highest need for academic gains. LaFleur’s findings support Gulosino’s (2011) research too, which established that charters were often opened just outside of cities with large urban centers or large populations. Rather than aligning this finding with the notion of mission-oriented charter schools, LaFleur dispelled some ideas surrounding the rationale of charters being established in those areas because of the need and ultimately assumed that the motivation was financial. If a mission-oriented charter school is organized to prioritize at-risk students, opening charter campuses just outside of the areas of greatest need signifies support for that cause, although for many of those students, getting outside of their immediate residency area is still difficult (Gulosino, 2011). Bifulco and Buerger (2015) support this explanation, having found that New York charter schools were more likely to located in districts

with higher per-pupil operating expenses, in areas with fewer high-need and low-cost students, and in areas with lower operating costs such as wages and rent. Beyond financial incentives, charter schools may also be established in areas with greater political influence, so the charter school can leverage advantages from political leaders (Henig & MacDonald, 2002).

**Marketing**

According to Lubienski (2007) and Johnson and Lindgren (2010), marketing is needed for charter schools in order to compete with other types of schools. Charter schools tend to refrain from sticking with "hard" information in their material like student statistics and school performance; instead, they focus on "soft" information, which is more feelings-based (Lubienski, 2007). This is a result of the fact that charter school services offer parents "credence goods," which is a good whose qualities "might never be fully assessed" (p.123), so families face difficulty discerning the effectiveness of schools after making a choice. Thus, parents base their decisions on school choice on the premise of beliefs and assumptions over hard evidence (Lubienski, 2007).

One way charter schools can effectively market their goods to parents is through reliance on education management organizations (EMOs). As mentioned by Potterton (2019), EMOs have an advantage in their ability to spend money on marketing. The EMOs have teams dedicated to branding and advertising themselves in a way to garner more attention from parents who are being courted by both traditional public schools and charter schools. In the study, Potterton (2019) analyzed qualitative data gathered by an Arizona school district from school leaders and parents. On top of a repetitive sense of "pressure" described by staff and parents, Potterton (2019) indicated student instruction was marketed as some sort of luxury car like a Cadillac rather than using marketing rooted in facts and realism. Despite the pressure and

marketing tactics employed by EMOs, Potterton (2019) recommended parents should be aware of using a critical eye when examining the advertising and marketing from charter schools.

Location, political support, and marketing, paired with the presumption of autonomy and innovation, are some of the factors considered by parents when making a school choice decision. More research, however, is needed to understand whether they are actually satisfied with the school choice and what their experiences are with school charters.

## Charter School Student Performance

In this section, I will demonstrate that research conducted to compare charter and traditional public school academic performance is inconclusive. Despite several studies listed, there is no clear-cut argument for one or the other with respect to student performance.

### Charter Schools Outperform Traditional Public Schools Academically

There have been studies that show student test scores are higher for charter school students, but these are typically done within the confines of a single city (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2011; Hoxby et al., 2009). Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2011) conducted research on middle and high-school students in Boston, Massachusetts. Their study of charter school students involved a lottery system. Students were randomly selected to attend either charter schools or pilot schools, which are essentially traditional public schools regulated by the Boston Public School district. Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2011) conducted their research using data for students in grades 3 to 8 and in grade 10 who took spring end-of-term assessments in math, English language arts, and writing. The researchers found the charter school students made significant gains closing the achievement gap between Black and White students on standardized tests, while the pilot school students did not.

An earlier national study had similar results. Hoxby (2004) found elementary-aged charter school students to be 5.2% more likely to be proficient in reading and 3.2% more likely to be proficient in math on state assessments (Hoxby, 2004). The caveat to this study, though, is that charter school students were compared to students in their "matched" school, which is the school the students would have likely attended, and that had a similar racial composition.

**Traditional Public Schools Outperform Charter Schools Academically**

There is also research supporting the idea that traditional public schools outperform charter schools (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Clark et al., 2015; Lubienski, 2007). Clark et al. (2015) conducted research at 33 different charter schools across 13 states, on middle school students who participated in a lottery system to determine if they could attend charter schools. In the study, the authors found that traditional public schools outperformed charter schools in both math and reading; however, neither difference was statistically significant. Similarly, Lubienski (2007) found a local traditional public high school outperformed its charter school counterpart by 4% on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, but at the elementary level, the charters outperformed the traditional public schools. Perhaps, more significant are the findings of Bifulco and Ladd (2006). Their study indicated North Carolina charter school students made smaller annual gains in math and reading than their similar counterparts did in traditional public schools.

**Both Traditional Public and Charter Perform Academically Equal**

Some research has shown no statistical difference between charter and traditional public schools in terms of academic progress (Hanushek et al., 2007; Hoxby (2004); Zimmer et al., 2012). Hanushek et al. (2007) studied new charter schools in Texas and determined they began by performing lower than traditional public schools, but after a couple of years, they performed

at the same level. The researchers concluded that newly formed charter schools start at a deficit and may take a few years to get on par with traditional public schools (Hanushek et al., 2007).

**The Challenge of Charter vs. Traditional School Comparison**

Some research, such as Marshall's (2017), challenges the legitimacy of comparing performance because charter schools have fewer special education students (Tuchman et al., 2018). Research found some parents with students who have special needs are guided away from enrolling their students in charter schools by charter school staff members (Marshall, 2017). This practice pushes more special education students and students with learning disabilities into traditional public schools. Because special education students typically do not perform as well as their general education counterparts on standardized tests, making comparisons of academic progress based on standardized tests is understandably skewed (Marshall, 2017).

Likewise, in the case of the Lubienski's (2007) study, the charter schools attract significantly fewer students who are economically disadvantaged, along with fewer minority students than the traditional public schools in the area. Yet, even at the elementary level, the charter schools are not significantly outperforming the traditional public schools on the state assessments (Lubienski, 2007). Lubienski asserts these test results actually suggest that the traditional public schools have superior effectiveness over the charter schools because they work with students with higher rates of poverty and poor English-language skills. The author believes the ability of the traditional public schools to be performing on par with the more privileged charter schools indicates that the traditional public school may be outperforming the charter schools if controlled for income and language spoken. On the contrary, the Hoxby's (2004) study finds elementary charter schools are especially likely to raise achievement of Hispanic or lower-

income students, further emphasizing the inconclusiveness of the literature comparing traditional and charter schools.

In summary, there is research that states charter schools outperform traditional public schools and some which states the opposite is true. Some studies suggest there is no difference between the two types of schools, and some say comparing traditional public school and charter school by scores is invalid altogether. Considering the mixed research findings, it would be understandable for people to have strong feelings for or against charter schools. It would also be understandable for parents to have a hard time deciphering the best option for their children. If the academics make it unclear as to which would be best for students, then maybe other factors revealed by parents' experiences with their children's school should be considered.

## Parents' Beliefs and Behaviors

One way to evaluate whether the school choice decision made by parents was successful is to explore their beliefs and behaviors after their children's enrollment in a particular type of school. This section examines existing research on various aspects of parent satisfaction with school choice, including the research associated with parent involvement behaviors and the relationship between parent satisfaction and involvement.

### Parent Satisfaction

Previous studies examine the satisfaction of parents whose children attend a charter school (Barrows et al., 2017; Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Gleason et al., 2010). Gleason et al. (2010) conducted a study based on 36 middle schools. The study compared the parents of children selected to attend a charter school through a lottery system to those who applied but were not selected to attend a charter school. Parents of students who won their spot through the lottery were 33% more likely than those who lost to rate their children's

current schools as excellent. They were also 10% more likely to state that their child liked school, indicating that parent satisfaction increases after charter school enrollment.

Similarly, Barrows et al. (2017) found in their research that charter school parents were more satisfied than traditional public-school parents. These parents reported fewer social disruptions and more communication with school officials at charter schools compared to traditional public schools. However, Buckley and Schneider (2006), tracked parents in Washington D.C. for three years from 2001 to 2004. Initially, charter school parents rated their satisfaction with their children's schools higher than their traditional public-school counterparts. Eventually, though, their perceptions of charter schools fell and equated to the same satisfaction level of traditional public-school parents.

Other studies indicated less satisfaction with charters. One such study revealed low-income parents from 10 cities were more satisfied with traditional public schools (Chambers & Michelson, 2020). The parents surveyed had a sense of loyalty to traditional public schools regardless of school performance. The parents were in favor of some school reform, but choosing to leave was not a favored option. This insight on loyalty to the first school of choice could be useful to lawmakers and charter advocates who are specifically targeting families in low-income areas because it demonstrates that they will have to find a way to break that loyalty before these parents choose charter schools (Chambers & Michelson, 2020).

While evidence supporting parent satisfaction of school choice can be found for charter and traditional public-school parents, having a choice does not increase parent satisfaction alone. Several factors may impact parents' level of school satisfaction including academics, school safety, extracurricular activities, distance from home, school culture, and school values (Cravens et al., 2012; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Goldring & Shapira, 1993). Parents' beliefs aligning with

the school mission may also be an important factor in parent satisfaction. There are charter schools created based on a specific mission or agenda, such as multi-lingual and fine arts programs, leadership academies, or "no excuses" schools that focus heavily on reading and math achievement by increasing instruction time and behavioral expectations. Traditional public schools, however, are less likely to have the ability to designate specific agendas for their schools (Howell, 2005).

In addition, parent satisfaction was strongly associated with school effectiveness and the achievement of students (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). Parent satisfaction was also found to be strongly associated with other aspects of the school, especially the ethos, the quality of the leadership and management, the behavior and welfare of students, and the handling of bullying and harassment (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000).

Perhaps some of the most conclusive literature, though, comes from Friedman et al. (2007). After conducting a study of 27 school districts and 30,270 parents across the United States, Friedman et al. (2007) determined that parent satisfaction could be predicted by parents' ability to receive information from the schools, the level of involvement afforded them by the teachers and school, adequacy of school resources, and how the school managed the budget. These factors significantly predicted the satisfaction of parents, even when controlled for demographics and district factors (Friedman et al., 2007).

All-in-all, in terms of school choice, parents who took the time to consider their school options were more likely to be satisfied, considering they were empowered to make the selection in the first place (Mather & Johnson, 2000).

**Parent Involvement**

Research demonstrates almost all families care about their children and are eager to remain active partners in their children's education (Epstein, 1995). This is important to recognize because there is a relationship between PreK-12$^{th}$ grade parental involvement and the academic success of students (Jeynes, 2012). However, the primary actors in achieving success are the students themselves, which is why students are placed at the center of Epstein's (1995) distinguished model of school, family, and community partnerships.

Parental involvement alone cannot guarantee student success, but Epstein's (1995) model assumed that if children feel cared for by the adults involved in the partnership, they will work harder to strive for success. Epstein (1995) also acknowledges that schools can be high-achieving and ignore the family role, and some students can still succeed in the absence of family involvement; however, schools that neglect to forge partnerships with parents create more barriers that affect student learning. Moreover, if parents feel unwelcomed, they may choose to take their children elsewhere. If parents are uninvolved, the academic success of their children could be impacted, thereby decreasing parent satisfaction.

Parental involvement is demonstrated and tracked in several ways; some involvement is home-based, and some is campus-based (Jeynes, 2012). Both home and campus-based parental involvement can be traced back to Epstein's (1995) framework of the six types of parent involvement. Types 1 (parenting) and 4 (learning at home) of Epstein's framework are examples of home-based involvement. Type 1 means all families establish home environments to support children's academic needs, while type 4 centers around families helping students with school-related matters, like homework or course planning (Epstein, 1995). Volunteering (type 3) and attending decision-making events (type 5) are examples of campus-based involvement. While

both types are leading to increased student achievement, home-based involvement – such as reading together or working on homework at night – has been shown to have a greater impact on student outcomes than campus-based involvement – such as volunteering at school (Crosby et al., 2015; Jeynes, 2012). Communication between parents and teachers (Epstein's type 2 of parental involvement) has also been linked to academic success (Jeynes, 2012). The sixth type of parental involvement focused on identifying and integrating resources from the community to strengthen school programs may affect students indirectly by increasing school resources.

Epstein's fifth type of involvement has also been empirically linked to parent involvement. Park and Holloway (2013) found school outreach efforts, including perception of a welcoming environment and informative school-home parent communication, to be a strong predictor of campus-based involvement amongst the high-school parents in their study. These communicative factors were also the most substantial predictors for home-based involvement, albeit on a lesser level than campus-based involvement.

However, the structure of both home and campus-based involvement – including providing children with academic assistance, fundraising, and volunteering – contributes to the misconception that disadvantaged families are resistant to school involvement (Elias et al., 2007). In such instances, parents do not feel competent or accepted as part of the "mainstream culture of education," which is why a focus on forms of involvement that provide parents a sense of "mastery and control" is so important (p.542-543). School choice can act as one such source of control for all parents, thereby increasing satisfaction.

Despite the benefits of parental involvement, research has shown involvement decreases as students are progressing into upper-grade levels (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). As students move into secondary schools, there are increased barriers

associated with maintaining parental involvement because and schools are larger and more bureaucratic, which makes forging personal relationships with parents more difficult (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The barrier related to size and complexity of secondary schools is due to the fact that teachers have far more students, and students have far more teachers (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Further, the students themselves are becoming increasingly autonomous and independent taking on a larger role in their own education (Park & Holloway, 2013). This increased autonomy leaves adolescent students with little desire for their parents to be as involved in their schooling. Likewise, parents begin to feel less able to assist in certain forms of involvement, such as homework, as their child's curriculum becomes more advanced (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Nonetheless, parental involvement is still an important factor in student achievement even at the secondary level (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The forms of involvement may start to look different though. In a study of 453 middle school students, Hill and Tyson (2009) pointed towards parent's academic socialization as an effective form of parent involvement. Academic socialization fosters the development of internalized motivation for achievement, focuses on future plans, links school and future aspiration, and provides adolescents the tools needed to make decisions themselves about their academic pursuits. It is a suitable parent involvement strategy for secondary schools because it depends solely on parental knowledge about navigating the school context, rather than high-quality relationships with teachers, which can be provided to the parent through school-home communications (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The need to provide parents with this important knowledge is another reason effective parent communication is integral to parent involvement and satisfaction.

The Park and Holloway study (2013) focused on a specific element of academic socialization in the form of parental expectations regarding their child's future schooling

endeavors, and the study focuses on high-school parents. The findings indicate that at the high school level, parental expectations on college attendance and financial planning are important forms of involvement, in addition to the extensively studied home and campus-based forms of involvement. Given that this study also found communication to be an important factor in promoting involvement, Park and Holloway suggest that "even in high school it is possible for teachers and staff to play a pivotal role in bolstering parent involvement" (p. 116).

Finally, there are also "subtle components of parental involvement," including parents maintaining high expectations, having open communication with their children, and demonstrating a home with both structure and love (Jeynes, 2012, p. 734). Regardless of the structure of the involvement, research reflects an urgency to promote family and community partnerships through all stages of development because schools alone are no longer prepared to provide every skill set needed for students to be successful life-long learners (Elias et al., 2007).

**Effective School-Home Communication**

Almost 100 years ago now, Waller (1932) proclaimed parents and teachers to be natural enemies due to a mutual distrust and hostility even though both parties are thought to act in the best interest of the child. Though almost 100 years of research now exists to support the need for parental engagement with schools, existing literature does indicate there are still strides to be made (Halsey, 2005; Miretzky, 2004; Reynolds et al., 2015). Ensuring that parents have a positive perception of their child's school is integral to a successful school-home partnership, given that parent involvement is correlated with increased student achievement (Cox 2005; Houri et al., 2020; Minke et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2015). Both parties can also recognize that communication between them is beneficial to the student (Halsey, 2005; Miretzky, 2004). One of the ways to shape parents' perception of the school commitment to educate their children is to

ensure effective forms of school-home communication. For instance, direct teacher-parent communication strengthens trust and improves parent involvement (Houri et al., 2020; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015).

Unsurprisingly, both teachers and parents have a desire to be seen and heard as individuals with something to offer to the partnership, which can be accomplished when meaningful forms of communication are adopted (Miretzky, 2004). The desire for partnership explains why the most effective form of school-home communication is two-way communication (Cox, 2005). Cox (2005) defines effective communication between the school and parents as a two-way exchange of information, which involves an invitation for parents to share information, feedback, and concerns. An effective two-way communication system goes beyond the mere invitation and expects a response from parents to indicate an equal, active role as a partner in the teacher-parent relationship, which empowers parents to initiate communication as they see fit (White & Levers, 2016). The onus for empowering the parents and building trust falls on the school (Cox, 2005; Houri et al., 2020; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015).

One hindrance to establishing such trust is the fact that teachers report that they send negative feedback home more frequently following behavior infractions, and they may fail to be proactive in communicating before problems arise (Halsey, 2005; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015). The Houri et al.'s (2020) study examined whether more positive forms of school-parent communication would garner more trust and involvement. The study, comprised of 51 third, fourth, and fifth grade parents with previously established low-engagement levels, asked teachers to send parents communication that followed three requirements: a positive greeting to the parent, a specific reason for the communication that was aligned to a desired outcome, and a

"wise statement" that communicated high expectations for the student and a genuine belief in the student's capacity to exceed them. As a result, communication and trust levels increased, thereby demonstrating how subjective perceptions of the parent-teacher relationship directly correlates to more active forms of involvement. Additionally, although two-way communication is more beneficial, Cox (2005) noted that one-way communication is still effective and has the added ability to be utilized with a wider variety of parent populations. The modern age has opened up avenues for even more forms of this type of communication including digital gradebooks, online learning management systems like Google Classroom or Canvas, email blasts, text-based apps like Remind, teacher websites, social media, and video streaming or even two-way conferencing (Tucker, 2017).

Still, though, a barrier to effective communication remains in the absence of trust and respect between the two parties. Parents and teachers have different perceptions about each other and about reasons that may hinder their communications (Halsey, 2005; Miretzky, 2004; Reynolds et al., 2015). Parents and teachers acknowledge that overcoming defensiveness when communicating with each other is a crucial component to building better relationships and opening the door for frequent communication (Miretzky, 2004). The pivotal role of strong communication between the two parties is especially true in secondary schools where parents perceive less of an invitation from school faculty to be actively involved with their child's schooling (Halsey, 2005).

Halsey's (2005) study of eight teachers, 20 parents, and 19 adolescents in grades six-eight focused on parent communication in middle school. At this school, communicative efforts failed, and once that happened, the efforts of both teachers and parents decreased, further dividing the two groups. The study found that the forms of communication to parents were both

"institutional and individual," with the majority of teachers relying on the least favored institutional invites to annual open house events and weekly newsletters (p. 61). Additionally, the parents in the Halsey's (2005) study reported that they perceived the weekly newsletters to be a one-way announcement of upcoming events; meanwhile, the teachers perceived the inclusion of upcoming events in the newsletters to be an invitation. The parents called for an increase in more personal forms of communication. Halsey's findings once again underscore the importance of examining the preconceived perceptions held by the two parties and the need for an explicit communication of intentions. Furthermore, Previous studies already indicated that relying on these traditional institutional opportunities is not enough to build the relationships necessary to effectively communicate with parents (Miretzky, 2004). Similarly, Houri et al.'s (2020) study demonstrated the powerful, positive impact that just one personalized letter sent home had on boosting two-way communication between parents and teachers.

Further, a study focused on an urban high school found specific invitations to be the most effective tool for increasing parent involvement, calling for more non-traditional ideas around what an "invitation" can look like (Reynolds et al., 2015). The study highlighted the importance of informal activities, extracurricular events, and parent leadership programs in providing opportunities for teachers to communicate more informally and personally with parents, thereby fostering the feeling of community between parents and the school.

The Reynolds et al.'s (2015) study also revealed that at the high school level, teachers focused on school-home communication methods, particularly feedback on student behavior and academic performance, while parents were more interested in aspects outside of the context and what a teacher can observe within the context of instruction, such as homework and attendance. Once again, the contrasting perceptions hindered the flow of communication, and as a result,

decreased parental involvement. Reynolds et al. (2015) also focused on a high school that served a large population of minority students. Both parents and teachers in this study blamed inefficiency on "significant cultural and linguistic barriers" and expressed a need for more assistance in addressing the socio-cultural differences (p.767). Thus, the findings call attention to the importance of understanding the complexities involved in serving racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse populations.

**Predictors of Parent Satisfaction**

Patrikakou and Weissberg (2000) focused on the relationship between parent satisfaction and the amount of parent-school involvement. They were able to show that even after factoring in socioeconomic variables, the most likely predictor of parent involvement was their positive perception of the school's outreach programs and their belief that the school was helpful and encouraging of students' learning, emphasizing the interconnected nature of parent satisfaction and involvement.

Furthermore, Friedman et al.(2007) concluded that in addition to parent involvement, the most important predictor of parent satisfaction was the school-home communication, with communication defined as the "information teachers and the school provide regarding the child's performance, school events, and opportunities for involvement in their child's education" (p. 283). Thus, it is imperative to better understand what aspects of communication are important to parents.

Taken together, it is still challenging to compare charter vs. traditional public schools with respect to parent satisfaction and involvement. One problem is that parents who are actively participating in the school choice process (i.e., by enrolling children in charter schools) may have

more financial resources, knowledge, and motivation, which inherently would allow them an opportunity to be more involved at home and at school (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006).

## Socio-Demographic Factors

There is widespread research suggesting that low-income or minority parents are usually less likely to participate in certain forms of school-based involvement such as volunteering or attending parent meetings for various reasons including: stigmatization, lack of confidence, cultural and linguistic barriers, and lack of time associated with full-time employment (Cherng, 2016; Friedman et al., 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Park & Holloway, 2013; Reynolds et al., 2015, Weiss et al., 2003). There is also research indicating that the factors determining parent satisfaction are different among various racial and ethnic groups, but minority parents are generally less satisfied with their child's school than white, non-Hispanic parents (Friedman et al., 2006).

In contrast, other studies present conflicting results on the effect of race and ethnicity on parent involvement that suggest that the impact of this factor can be overestimated if other characteristics such as income and parent education are not considered (Lareau, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006, Park & Holloway, 2013). In a study of 3,247 White, Hispanic, and African-American parents of high school students, Park and Holloway (2013) found that the "effect of racial/ethnic affiliation [on school-based involvement] disappeared when household income and mothers' education were taken into account" (p. 115-116). Thus, it is imperative to further research how family socio-demographics impact the parent's overall satisfaction with the school choice for their children.

**Race/Ethnicity and Home Language**

Existing research illustrates how racial and ethnic biases held by school officials have a negative impact on the level of school and home-based involvement of minority parents. Studies indicate that minority parents feel judged or stigmatized by schools on the basis of racist beliefs (Cherng, 2016; McKay et al., 2003). It is not surprising this negatively impacts parent involvement at school (Lee & Bowen, 2006), which further leads to school faculty's perceptions of lack of involvement by minority parents. McKay et al. (2003) also demonstrated that even though racism awareness decreased school-based types of involvement, it increased home-based types of involvement, which makes sense given the parents' increased understanding of racial prejudices within the schoolhouse.

Likewise, Park and Holloway (2013) found that African-American and Hispanic parents participated more in home-based involvement activities, such as monitoring homework, than White, non-Hispanic parents. In contrast, White, non-Hispanic parents in the study were found to be more likely to participate in school-based activities than Black and Hispanic parents. However, African American parents were more active in site-based involvement at school if they perceived school personnel maintained effective and informative communication (Park & Holloway, 2013). These studies suggest that African American and Hispanic parents are involved in their children's schooling in ways not noticed by school personnel (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Park & Holloway, 2013). Consequently, lack of involvement may lead to a decrease in parent satisfaction because their role in children's education may not be recognized by the school.

Furthermore, teacher perceptions of parental involvement can influence whether teachers communicate effectively with parents. While math and English teachers contacted fewer Asian

parents about homework and behavioral issues, Cherng (2016) found that math teachers contacted a higher proportion of Hispanic and African American parents about disruptive student behavior than White parents. Though they were more likely to contact them about issues, the study also revealed teachers were less likely to contact immigrant Hispanic and Asian parents with news of their children's accomplishments.

Another reason for the racial and ethnic disparities concerning school-home communication is a cultural and linguistic barrier between the parents and teachers. The aforementioned Reynolds et al. (2014) study findings highlighted the jointly expressed need for more assistance in communicating with each other to overcome cultural and linguistic differences. This study particularly focused on the successful effort of the school under analysis to understand Hispanic families and their diversity in terms of cultural, racial, and even linguistic background. However, the school neglected to understand other racial and ethnic minority populations, thus demonstrating the need for further growth in the area of inclusion and equity.

Friedman et al. (2007) already determined parent involvement and school-home communication to be the most important factor of parent satisfaction. However, research revealed that the school personnel may not have positive views of minority parents' involvement. This negative perception coupled with disparities in school-home communication for certain groups, makes race and ethnicity a crucial factor to consider in exploring parental satisfaction with children's schools.

**Parent Education**

Lee and Bowen (2006) examined the relationship between parent involvement, cultural capital (as measured by the level of parental education), and children's achievement. Through

school involvement, educated parents also invest in the social capital of their children (i.e., social networks, access to school resources) as supported by Coleman's (1988) theory of social capital. It has already been noted that mother's education is one of the two most important factors in predicting school-based parent involvement, and it is also an important factor in shaping children's educational aspirations (Park & Holloway, 2013). The study also found that mothers who graduated college felt more successful towards their role in their child's academic experience and perceived the school as more welcoming. Although the study did reveal lower rates of home-based involvement for more educated mothers (i.e., lack of time), they developed higher levels of satisfaction with their child's school.

**Homeownership Status**

Renters are three times more likely than homeowners to move, which is an important factor because residential mobility that results in frequently changing schools is detrimental to a student's ability to achieve academic success (Crowley, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), White, non-Hispanic householders had the highest homeownership rates at 74.4% in the fourth quarter of 2021. On the contrary, African American families had the lowest rate at 43.1%, which is only 5.3% less than Hispanic families. Among Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander householders, 61.2% were homeowners. Thus, African American and Hispanic families are more likely to be renters, and therefore, more likely to become transient, which affects the academic achievement of children.

A notable exception to the negative impacts of residential mobility is a move that may result in a dramatic improvement to the quality of education resources offered by the new school. These moves certainly have the opposite effect on student outcomes, though they represent a rare occurrence in low-income or minority households (Crowley, 2003). Because admission to

charter schools is not dependent on residential location like traditional public schools, renters and even homeowners in lower-income neighborhoods may be equally satisfied with their school choice.

### Family Income

Low-income parents are found to reportedly be less involved and less satisfied with their child's school (Friedman et al., 2006; Friedman et al., 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006). However, the type of involvement must be considered, as it effects how low-income families participate in their child's education. In Park and Holloway's (2013) study, parents of higher socioeconomic statuses felt more responsible for their child's education, felt more successful about their role in that education, perceived the school to be welcoming, and showed greater participation in school-based types of involvement. However, this category of parents was less involved at home in terms of monitoring homework than parents of lower socioeconomic statuses; though, they still had higher involvement in terms of performance expectations and higher education planning.

## Theoretical Framework

### Cultural and Social Capital

In 1986, Bourdieu proposed three fundamental forms of interdependent capital – economic, cultural, and social – to explain the structure and functioning of the social world. In the current study, the notions of cultural and social capital will guide the discussion of parental involvement in both traditional public schools and charter schools.

Cultural capital exists in three forms (Bourdieu, 1986), the embodied state (e.g., cultural tastes and dispositions of the parents), the objectified state (e.g., cultural goods), and the institutionalized state (e.g., educational level of the parents), and is acquired by students through

socialization within the family. In terms of the relevance of cultural capital in the education system, this is manifested respectively as personal dispositions and knowledge from experience, connections to education-related objects such as books or technology, and connections to education-related institutes (Grenfell & James, 2003; Robbins, 1999). Because cultural capital is inherited, students benefit from the cultural capital acquired and passed down by their parents. Thus, parents with less cultural capital due to an incongruence in lifestyle, values, and experiences between themselves and the dominant culture found in most American schools, wield less power to promote an enhanced academic experience.

Despite the amount of inherited cultural capital that a student possesses, the concept of social capital works to increase the cultural capital of the student and parent, which suggests social capital is beneficial to school choice. Social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986), is the composite of the actual and potential resources within a given network, so the volume of one's social capital is dependent, not only upon the size of the network, but by the capital possessed by each person within that network. The ability to expand such a network is how school choice can be a way to build social capital for both the student and parent in an effort to improve student achievement (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988; Lubienski, 2007). Coleman (1988) demonstrated that high school students who had greater amounts of social capital had lower dropout rates; the social capital came in the form of contributions from the family and the adult community surrounding the school, with greater impact stemming from the family's involvement.

Furthermore, through involvement with the school, parents increase their own social network by acquiring knowledge about the school and academic opportunities, accessing resources and information, and interacting with teachers and other parents (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). This information, in turn, is passed down to their children in the form of

cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). However, it is important to note that differences in parents' cultural capital may reduce a parent's ability to secure such social capital from the school despite their involvement. This is, once again, where the notion of school choice becomes intertwined with parent involvement and its impact on parent satisfaction. A lack of social and cultural capital on the part of the parent contribute to barriers between home and school, thereby rendering communication ineffective and decreasing parental involvement; this, in turn, would lower the parent's satisfaction with their child's school. Together, the theories of cultural and social capital can guide the study to support the relevance of parent socio-demographic characteristics, parent involvement, effective school-home communication, and school choice as capital investments.

To operationalize involvement, I will follow Epstein's (1995) framework of a broader definition of involvement, including both school-centered and external forms of parental participation with their child's learning. I argue that through all forms of school-centered and home-centered involvement, parents support their children to acquire cultural and social capital.

**Parental Satisfaction Framework**

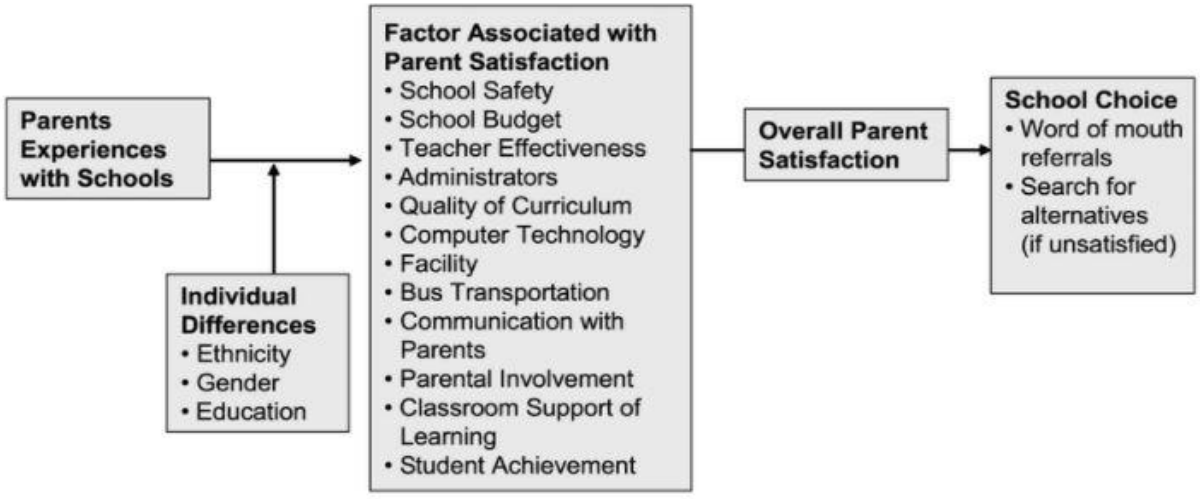
Parent satisfaction is multifaceted and includes both academic and non-academic factors (Hausman & Goldring, 2000). Friedman et al. (2007) developed a conceptual model to delineate parent satisfaction, using data conducted by Harris Interactive Inc., which is a market research firm that conducts nationwide educational research. From 2002-2005, Harris Interactive collected survey data from 31,113 parents and guardians from 121 different schools and 27 school districts across the United States (Friedman et al., 2007).

According to Friedman et al. (2007), the parent satisfaction model includes parents' experiences with the school in addition to individual differences such as ethnicity, gender, and

education level. The model then includes factors associated with the school: school safety, school budget, teacher effectiveness, administrators, quality of curriculum, computer technology, facility, bus transportation, communication with parents, parental involvement, classroom support of learning, and student achievement. As shown in Figure 2.1, parents' characteristics, their experiences with their children's schools, and school-related factors determine parents' level of satisfaction with school choice (Friedman et al., 2007). Friedman et al. (2007) found that three factors were significant and meaningful predictors of parents' satisfaction: communication and involvement, school resources, and quality of leadership and budget adequacy.

Figure 2.1

*Friedman's et al. (2007) Model of Parental Satisfaction and School Choice*




Friedman et al.'s (2007) parental satisfaction model (Figure 2.1) explaining school choice is quite complex, and the factors used for this study will be limited by the variables available in the NHES data. Because Friedman et al. (2007) determined these factors to be the most significant, for the purpose of my dissertation, the focus will be on parental involvement and assessment of school-home communication. High levels of involvement and effective

communication would also allow a parent to be familiar with the school resources and the quality of leadership and budget adequacy, so this study will not explore the budget adequacy factor. Due to the breadth of existing literature supporting the notion that socio-demographic factors play a complex role in these relationships, I will also be retaining the individual differences variables in the Friedman et al. model.

Ultimately, the main assumption of this study is that parent involvement is the most important predictor of parent satisfaction, and the level of parent satisfaction will be different when comparing charter and traditional public schools. The secondary assumption being made here is that charter school parents will be more involved and, therefore, more satisfied with their child's school due to the nature of school choice process requiring parents to be somewhat involved and knowledgeable about the school to make the choice in the first place.

## Summary

In this chapter, I provided, first, background information on the charter school system in the United States, along with a review of the literature on parental perception of autonomy and innovation in charter schools. Then, I discussed two key factors in parents' decision to enroll their children in charter schools, which included geographic location and marketing tactics to better understand their likely expectations when choosing charter schools. Afterwards, I discussed student achievement in charter vs. traditional public schools, emphasizing the lack of clear evidence of one type having better educational outcomes. While these three factors are notable, the argument of my study is that most important motivating factors in student continuant enrollment are parent satisfaction and parent involvement. As such, I first reviewed the literature on parent satisfaction in context of parents' choice to enroll their children in charter schools. Next, I explained the foundational concepts behind parental involvement in schools, and I

reviewed literature related to school-home communication. Lastly, I brought these elements together by introducing the idea that parent satisfaction and various forms of parental involvement are related to each other.

Finally, I shared the theoretical framework of this study, based on Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social capital. Both parent satisfaction and involvement are tied to the cultural and social capital possessed by families prior to and as a result of engaging in their children's education through school events and out-of-school activities. The study is also guided by notions from Friedman et al.'s (2007) model of parent satisfaction. I expect to confirm my assumption that as parents become more involved with their child's education, they, in turn, grow more satisfied, and these effects are different for charter and traditional public schools.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHOD

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine parents' satisfaction with their children's schooling in relation to parents' involvement with school events and parents' assessment of effective school-home communication. The main design variable is the type of public school attended by students, as it will allow for comparisons between charter high-schools and traditional public high-schools parents. The study used data from the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) on Parent and Family Involvement in Education (PFI), and will address the following three research questions:

1. Are there any socio-demographic differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, education, home ownership, income) between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students?
2. Are there differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students with respect to levels of satisfaction with school, assessment of school-home communication, and involvement in school events and out-of-school activities?
3. To what extent do school choice, parents' characteristics, involvement with school events and out-of-school activities, and assessment of school-home communication contribute to the overall level of parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children?

## Research Design

### Data

The 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) public data is available from the National Center of Education Statistics. The 2016 NHES Parent and Family Involvement (PFI) in Education Survey was conducted on behalf of the U.S. Department of

Education in order to gather information on family involvement in school (Wang et al., 2019). Data was collected from parents of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 or who were homeschooled, who answered questions about school choice and parent involvement in education, such as help with homework and other home-based activities, and parent engagement in schools.

The survey questionnaire itself was composed of questions to also determine family demographics, family activities, child health, and aspects related to school. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity for parents to describe their level of satisfaction with their child's school and to offer their opinions about the effectiveness of school-home communication. Other survey items inform on the level of parental involvement with school events, which are also relevant to this study.

Surveys are a systematic way of gathering information from a representative sample in order to draw conclusions about a larger population (Groves et al., 2011). Although Groves et al. (2011) recommend surveys as a method of gathering data, they also warn of issues such as sampling error when the sample chosen is not representative of the population. The NCES surveys address the sampling error issues by randomizing the selection of families chosen to participate, as well as including families from all over the country (Appendix 2). Therefore, the secondary analysis of nationally representative data ensures the generalizability of findings.

**Research Sample**

The 2016 NHES-PFI representative sample consists of 14,075 parents of K-12 students who attend a variety of private and public schools (including charter schools) or are receiving homeschooling. A total of 11,991 (i.e., 85.2%) are enrolled in public schools, and 843 of them (i.e., 7%) are enrolled in charter schools. The study is focused on high-school students, which is

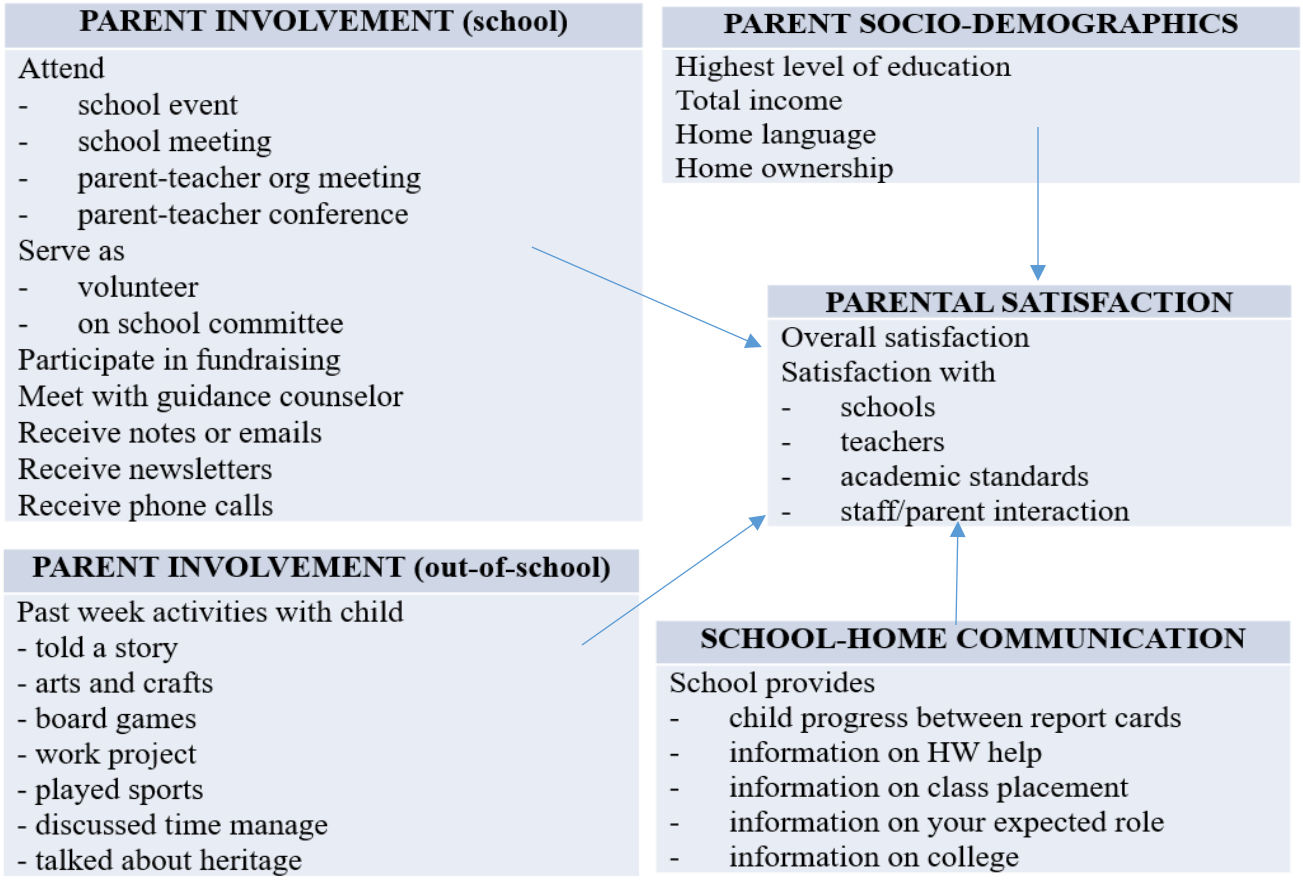
reducing the research sample of parents to N=258 high-school charter respondents. The NHES-PFI sample also includes a total of 4,360 parents of traditional high-school students. To create equivalent subsamples of parents, a comparable subsample of 258 respondents from the public high-school group was randomly selected. The final research sample consists of N=516 parents of high-school students differentiated by charter vs. traditional public-school type.

**Analytical framework**

Guided by Friedman et al.'s (2007) model and the available NHES-PFI data, I used an analytical framework presented in Figure 3.1. Variables indicate the main constructs used in the study: parent socio-demographics, parent involvement, parents' assessment of school-home-home communication, and parental satisfaction.

Figure 3.1:

*Study Analytical Framework*



## Variables

In this section, I present details about the variables used in the study (Table 3.1). Original variable names are indicated in the first column, although most variables have been recoded and were used as indicated in the last column. Many variables have been derived using 2 or more survey items. More details are provided below.

Table 3.1

*Variables and Constructs*

| Variable Name | Type | Codes/categories |
|---|---|---|
| **Sample selection and weights** | | |
| Type of school (SCPUBPRI) | Categorical | 4=Public school |
| Charter school (SCHRTSCHL) | Categorical | 1=Yes |
| Grade attended (GRADE) | Categorical | Grades 9th to 12th |
| Final interview weight (FPWT) | Continuous | [409.23 – 34,438.45] |
| **Child variables** | | |
| Type of high school (SCPUBPRI/ SCHRTSCHL) | 2-category var (derived) | 0=Traditional; 1=Charter |
| Child sex (CSEX) | 2-cat var | 0=Male; 1=Female |
| Child race/ethnicity (CHISPAN/ CAMIND/ CASIAN/ CBLACK/ CPACI/ CWHITE CHISPRM) | 6-category var (derived) | 1=Indigenous; 2=Asian; 3=Black; 4=Hispanic; 5=Multiracial; 6=White |
| **Parent socio-demographics** | | |
| Home language: Parents first language (P1FRLNG/ P2FRLNG) & Language spoken most often at home (P1SPEAK/ P2SPEAK) | 2-category var (derived) | 0=English; 1=Other than English |
| Highest level of education among both parents (P1EDUC/P2EDUC) | 4-category var (derived) | 1=High school or less<br>2=Associate/some college<br>3=Bachelor's/ prof degree<br>4=Graduate/advanced |
| Total income (TTLHHINC) | Ordinal scale [1-10] | 1=0-10k; 2=10-20k; 3=20-30k; 4=30-40k; 5=40-50k; 6=50-60k; 7=60-75k; 8=75-100k; 9=100-150k; 10=150k or more |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Home ownership (OWNRNTHB) | 2-category var | 0=Owner; 1=Renter |
| **Parent participation in school events** | | |
| Attend a school event (FSSPORTX) | | |
| Serve as a volunteer (FSVOL) | | |
| Attend a school meeting (FSMTNG) | | |
| Parent-teacher org meeting (FSPTMTNG) | 2-category variables | 0=No; 1=Yes |
| Parent-teacher conference (FSATCNFN) | | |
| Participate in fundraising (FSFUNDRS) | | |
| Serve on school committee (FSCOMMTE) | | |
| Meet with guidance counselor (FSCOUNSLR) | | |
| Receive notes or emails (FSNOTESX) | | |
| Receive newsletters (FSMEMO) | | |
| Receive phone calls (FSPHONCHX) | | |
| **Parent participation in out of school activities [In the past week..]** | | |
| Child has been told a story (FOSTORY2X) | | |
| Arts and crafts (FOCRAFTS) | | |
| Played board games (FOGAMES) | 2-category variables | 0=No; 1=Yes |
| Worked on a project (FOBUILDX) | | |
| Playing sports (FOSPORT) | | |
| Discussed time management (FORESPON) | | |
| Discussed ethnic heritage (FOHISTX) | | |
| **Parent assessment of school-home communication [School provides ..]** | | |
| Child progress between report cards (FSSPPERF) | 4-category variables | 1=Does not do it all<br>2=Not very well<br>3=Just ok<br>4=Very well |
| Information on homework help (FSSPHW) | | |
| Information on class placement (FSSPCOUR) | | |
| Information on expected role (FSSPROLE) | | |
| Information on college (FSSPCOLL) | | |
| Overall communication | Ordinal scale [1-4] | Derived mean score |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Parent satisfaction variables [Satisfaction with..]** | | |
| Schools (FCSCHOOL) | 4-category variables | 1=Very dissatisfied |
| Teachers (FCTEACHR) | | 2=Somewhat dissatisfied |
| Academic standards (FCSTDS) | | 3=Somewhat satisfied |
| School staff/parent interaction (FCSUPPRT) | | 4=Very satisfied |
| Overall satisfaction | Ordinal scale [1-4] | Derived mean score |

As shown in Table 3.1, several survey items have been used to select the sample: public school, high school (i.e., grade attended), and charter school information. The school type information was further used to create the main design variable of the study that differentiable charter and traditional public high-school parents (and children). Child sex and race were included in the descriptive and bivariate analyses but were not hypothesized to affect parental satisfaction.

Parent socio-demographic variables include home language (2-category variable), highest level of parental education (4-category variable), total family income (ordinal variable) and home ownership (2-category variable). These factors indicate the available cultural capital possessed by family that would be transferred to children. These factors also indicate the level of resources available to parents that might affect involvement in their children's education as a measure of existing and acquirable social capital.

According to Friedman et al.'s (2007) model, there are several types of parental involvement, classified in this study as: parent school involvement, parent out-of-school involvement, and assessment of school-home communication. Parental school involvement measures were based on a variety of dichotomous questions (e.g., served on a committee, volunteered at campus, met with teacher, receiving information, etc.) to indicate parents'

participation in school events and interactions with school personnel. Similarly, parental out-of-school involvement measures were based on dichotomous questions (e.g., reading stories, playing board games, discussing time management, discussing heritage, etc.) to indicate time spent by parents interacting at home with their children. Further, parents' assessment of school-home communication (e.g., reports cards, homework support, class placement, expected parental role, college information) were measured on a 4-point Likert scale item going from 'Does not do it all' to does it 'Very well.' These measures of parents' assessment of school-home communication were considered separately or aggregated as a mean score of overall communication.

The main outcome variables of the study are the parental satisfaction variables. Separate measures of satisfaction with school, teachers, academic standards, and school-parent interaction were reported on a 4-point Likert scale item going from 'Very dissatisfied' to 'Very satisfied.' These variables were examined separately, and an overall measure of parental satisfaction will be also derived as a mean score.

**Data Analysis**

Table 3.2 presents the three research questions of the study and describes the variables and statistical procedures conducted to address each question. The analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26 and included descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency tables, means), cross tabulations and chi-square tests, ANOVA tests, and multiple linear regression model (George & Mallery, 2019). The analysis was done using normalized weights computed from the survey weight to preserve the counts in the sample while reproducing the proportions in the population. Variables required additional data preparation like recoding of survey items to indicate an increased level of satisfaction. Dichotomous variables were simply recoded (0=No;

1=Yes). Other variables (e.g., home language) were derived based on information from two or more survey questions. I also explored the reliability of two scales of satisfaction and school-home-home communication before deriving the overall mean scores. Cronbach's alpha of .809 for the satisfaction scale and .857 for the assessment of communication scales indicate high reliability. Finally, in preparation of the linear regression analysis, dummy variables were created for the categorical variables with three categories or more (e.g., parental education).

Table 3.2

*Summary of Research Questions and Analyses*

| **Research question** | **Variables** | **Statistical procedure** |
|---|---|---|
| RQ1: Are there any socio-demographic differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, education, income) between parents of charter high school and traditional public high school students? | Type of school (IV)<br>-Parent socio-demographics | Descriptive statistics<br>Crosstabulations and chi-square tests<br>ANOVA tests |
| RQ2: Are there differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students with respect to levels of satisfaction with school, assessment of school-home communication, and involvement in school events and out-of-school activities? | Type of school (IV)<br>-Parent satisfaction<br>-Parent assessment of school-home communication<br>-Parent participation in school events<br>-Parent participation in out-of-school activities | Descriptive statistics<br>Crosstabulations & chi-square tests<br>ANOVA tests |
| RQ3: To what extent do school choice, parents' characteristics, involvement with school events and out-of-school activities, and assessment of school-home communication contribute to the overall parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children? | Parent overall satisfaction (DV)<br>-Type of school<br>-Parent socio-demographics<br>-Parent assessment of school-home communication<br>-Parent participation in school events<br>-Parent participation in out-of-school activities | Multiple linear regression |

**Statistical Procedures.** According to Creswell (2009), descriptive statistics include means, standard deviations, and ranges of data for continuous variables as well as counts and percentages for categorical variables. Using descriptive statistics is one way to become more familiar with the data and provide some context for the sample (Johnson, 1992).

Cross tabulations were used to show the distribution of parents' socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, home language, education) by school type. In addition, the distribution of survey items corresponding to parents' involvement were presented by school type (George & Mallery, 2019). For all these cross tabulations, I used chi-square tests as a way to determine if the corresponding categorical variables were independent from one another (Bluman, 2008; Gall et al., 2007).

Additionally, ANOVA tests are used to compare group means of continuous variables by independent factors (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1995). For instance, I used ANOVA to test if the overall means of parental satisfaction and assessment of school-home communication differ by school type (George & Mallery, 2019). Because the comparative analysis involves only two groups (i.e., charter and traditional school parents), t-tests could have been performed instead of ANOVA tests. Although both tests were appropriate, I chose ANOVA test, which is more robust against the normality assumptions for ordinal 4-point Likert measures. Finally, I used a multiple linear regression model to analyze the relative contribution of all hypothesized predictors to the overall level of parental satisfaction (Gall et al., 2007).

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS

The availability of various public-school programs from which students and their families can choose, and the recent growth in charter school enrollment within the past few decades, has resulted in charter schools becoming one of most debated topics in American education (Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Place & Gleason, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). It could have been hypothesized that the expansion of the charter system is associated with better student outcomes in charter schools; however, research centered on this topic has been inconclusive. The mixed results beg the question as to what other factors influence parents when faced with choosing a school for their children. In general, research shows a relationship between parent satisfaction with the school chosen, parent involvement in the child's education, and student outcomes (Friedman et al., 2007). This study aims to determine what specific parent-related factors correlate to parent satisfaction when comparing charter-school and traditional public-school parents.

Prior to conducting my research, I hypothesized that charter school parents would be more satisfied with their child's school, and the level of parent involvement would be the greatest indicator of satisfaction. I explored these hypotheses through three research questions:

- Are there any socio-demographic differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, education, home ownership, income) between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students?
- Are there differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students with respect to levels of satisfaction with school,

assessment of school-home communication, and involvement in school events and out-of-school activities?

- To what extent do school choice, parents' characteristics, involvement with school events and out-of-school activities, and assessment of school-home communication contribute to the overall level of parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children?

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, organized by each research question. First, I compare the two parent groups with respect to socio-demographic characteristics, which also includes descriptive statistics of the sample (RQ1). Second, I conduct a comparative analysis by parent groups of all variables included in the study (RQ2). Finally, I employ regression analysis to model parental satisfaction by all independent variables hypothesized in the analytical model (Figure 3.1) (RQ3).

## Research Question 1

*Are there any socio-demographic differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, education, homeownership, income) between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students?*

To answer this research question, I ran a series of cross tabulations to compare and contrast the distributions of parents in each type of public high-school (i.e., traditional and charter) by various categorical variables. In addition to parents' characteristics, I included child sex, race/ethnicity, and language spoken at home to better understand the sample. In order to understand family socio-economic level, I also ran a series of cross tabulations to compare and contrast the parent education level and home ownership (renters vs. buyers). The analyses present descriptive statistics of the sample and the chi-square tests that indicate the association

between the type of school and the socio-demographic characteristics. The income level is measured on an ordinal scale from 1-10 representing incremental increases (Table 3.1). For the family income variable, the mean values and results of ANOVA test are presented. The statistical significance of the relationship between school type and each variable is indicated by the *p* value of the test. Although *p* values less than .05 show strong evidence of statistically significant effects, I will also comment on effects at the .1 level (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Socio-demographic Variables by School Type (column %, N=516)*

| Variable | Traditional (n=272) | Charter (n=244) |
|---|---|---|
| Child sex (ns) | | |
| Male | 53.9 | 50.8 |
| Female | 46.1 | 49.2 |
| Child Race/ethnicity (***) | | |
| White non-Hispanic | 52.6 | 40.6 |
| African American | 15.4 | 17.2 |
| Hispanic | 16.9 | 34.0 |
| Asian | 10.3 | 3.7 |
| Native Americans & Multiracial | 4.8 | 4.5 |
| Language spoken at home (***) | | |
| English | 91.5 | 76.2 |
| Not English | 8.5 | 23.8 |
| Parental education (**) | | |
| High school diploma or below | 28.7 | 43.3 |
| Vocational, associate degree, some college | 32.7 | 24.1 |
| Bachelor or some prof /graduate education | 24.3 | 20.4 |
| Graduate or professional degree completed | 14.3 | 12.2 |
| Home ownership (ns) | | |
| Owners | 65.1 | 59.8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Renters | 34.9 | 40.2 |
| Family income (***) | | |
| Ordinal var incremental range [1-10] | 6.86 | 5.68 |

$^{+}$ $p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$

First, there is no significant difference by child's sex between the two types of school; although, there are higher proportions of male students in the traditional schools. There was a significant effect by race/ethnicity with larger percentages of Hispanic students in charter schools (34%) compared to traditional schools (16.9%). On the contrary, there are higher percentages of White students in traditional schools (52.6%) compared to charter schools (40.6%). Similarly, there are higher percentages of Asian students in traditional schools (10.3%) compared to charter schools (3.7%).

Furthermore, there is a significantly higher percentage of students who speak languages other than English at home in charter schools (23.8%) compared to traditional public schools (8.5%). This appears to be reasonable considering the greater proportion of Hispanic students in charter schools. Indeed, the distribution of home language by child race indicates that 70.4% of those speaking a language other than English at home are Hispanics, followed by 13.6% Asian students (results not shown in the table).

Finally, when comparing the distributions of parents' highest level of education by school type, data shows that 43.3% of charter school parents compared to 28.7% of traditional school parents had a high school diploma or below. The percentages of traditional school parents were slightly higher for all other educational attainment categories. For instance, the percentages of parents holding bachelor's degrees were 20.4% and 24.3% in charter schools vs. traditional public schools, respectively. The difference was even lower at the postgraduate level, with 12.2% of charter school parents and 14.3% of public traditional school parents completing

graduate or professional degree programs. Overall, the level of education was higher for parents of students in traditional schools.

Although not significant, there is a slightly higher percentage of homeowners among traditional school parents (65.1%) compared to charter school parents (59.8%). Similarly, when comparing the average family income, data show a statistically significant difference between the two groups suggesting the average income was around $70,000 for traditional school families compared to $60,000 for charter school families. In conclusion, charter schools appear to be the choice of less affluent families and less educated parents, possibly from more diverse ethnic and language backgrounds.

**Research Question 2**

*Are there differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students with respect to levels of satisfaction with school, assessment of school-home communication, and involvement in school events and out-of-school activities?*

In this section, I will compare, first, the level of parental satisfaction and then, school-home communication assessment between the charter and traditional public-school parents. The individual items are measured on a 4-point Likert scale, and the overall mean scores are ordinal variables also ranging from 1 to 4. ANOVA tests were conducted to compare the mean scores for all these measures and find statistically significant differences between the group means. Table 4.2 shows means and standard deviations, the *p* value and significance of ANOVA tests for overall satisfaction (average of satisfaction over all 5 specific items), and satisfaction with each aspects of schooling. In addition, parents were asked to assess the level of school-home communication provided. The variables were also measured on a 4-point Likert scale. Table 4.2 shows the means and standard deviations, *p* value and the significance of ANOVA test for

overall communication (average of satisfaction over all 5 specific items), and the satisfaction with each aspect of communication.

Table 4.2

*Parental Satisfaction and Assessment of School Communication by School Type*

| | Mean (standard deviation) | | ANOVA tests ($p$ value) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Traditional | Charter | |
| **School Satisfaction** | | | |
| Overall Satisfaction | 3.26 (.70) | 3.52 (.54) | <.001*** |
| School | 3.32 (.80) | 3.55 (.65) | <.001*** |
| Teachers | 3.30 (.70) | 3.51 (.64) | <.001*** |
| Academic standards | 3.29 (.81) | 3.59 (.60) | <.001*** |
| Discipline | 3.25 (.87) | 3.56 (.73) | <.001*** |
| Staff/parent interaction | 3.12 (.81) | 3.38 (.74) | <.001*** |
| **Assessment of Parent-school Communication** | | | |
| Overall assessment | 2.81 (.87) | 3.04 (.79) | .002** |
| Progress between report cards | 3.08 (1.01) | 3.34 (.91) | .002** |
| Information on homework help | 2.66 (1.09) | 2.85 (1.07) | .045* |
| Information on class placement | 2.50 (1.19) | 2.85 (1.10) | <.001*** |
| Information on parent's role | 2.81 (1.08) | 2.98 (1.06) | .068$^{+}$ |
| Information on college | 3.00 (.92) | 3.22 (.88) | .009** |

$^{+}p < .1$; $*p < .05$; $**p<.01$; $***p<.001$

A quick exploration of data in Table 4.2 shows that parents of charter school students are more satisfied with their children's schools. Mean values over 3.0 suggest a level of satisfaction between 'somewhat satisfied' and 'very satisfied'. Overall satisfaction is higher (3.52 vs. 3.26) for charter school parents. Charter school parents also reported higher satisfaction with each aspect of schooling: school, teachers, academic standards, discipline, and interaction with staff.

All ANOVA tests were statistically significant at the .001 level. When we compare the level of satisfaction for various schooling aspects, the lowest scores for both school types are obtained for the staff/parent interaction. Within each parent group, the highest score for traditional public school is satisfaction with school as a whole, and for charter schools, it is satisfaction with academic standards. The lowest level of satisfaction for charter school parents is satisfaction with staff/parent interaction (3.38), which is also the lowest among traditional school parents (3.12). Taken together, the highest level of satisfaction traditional parents reported for any aspect of schooling is still lower than the lowest level of satisfaction reported by charter school parents.

Similar results are obtained for all five questions regarding parental assessment of the school-home communication, with statistically significant differences between the mean scores for charter and traditional public-school parents. The items were measured on 4-point Likert scales assessing if the level of communication matches parental expectations: “Does not do it all; Not very well; Just ok; Very well.” First, parents of charter school students were more inclined to offer a positive assessment of communication than traditional school parents. Thus, the overall assessment of information communicated to parents was higher in charter school (3.04) than traditional public schools (2.81). However, the levels of assessment were quite low around ‘Just ok’ level of communication for both groups. Second, the highest level of communication for both groups of parents regarded the information on child progress offered between report cards (3.34 vs. 3.08 for charter compared to traditional schools). In addition, charter school parents received more information on class placement (2.85 for charter vs. 2.50 for traditional public school), information on homework help (2.85 for charter vs. 2.66 for traditional) and information on college (3.22 for charter vs. 3.00 for traditional). The ANOVA test was only slightly significant at the .1 level, showing low mean differences between the two groups with respect to the

information on the expected role of parents (2.98 for charter vs. 2.81 for traditional school parents).

In conclusion, there were statistical differences noted that indicates charter school parents are more satisfied with their child's school, and they assess higher the level of school-home communication compared to their traditional public-school counterparts. Overall, the levels of assessment of school-home communication were lower than the levels of parental satisfaction with school. Differences between the two parent groups were also less significant for the assessment of school-home communication measures.

**Parent School Involvement**

In this section, I will compare reported parent involvement with school events between the charter and traditional school parents. Parents from both charter and traditional public schools provided yes or no answers to several questions that determine their school involvement. Tables 4.3 presents percentages of parents reporting (or not) specific involvements for each school type and the *p* value and significance of chi-square tests that indicate the association between school type and each involvement event.

Table 4.3

*Parent School Involvement by School Type (Column %)*

| | Parent response | Traditional (n=272) | Charter (n=244) | Chi-square tests (p value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attend a school event | No | 31.3 | 29.9 | .743 |
| | Yes | 68.8 | 70.1 | |
| Serve as a volunteer | No | 76.8 | 68.9 | .041* |
| | Yes | 23.2 | 31.1 | |
| Attend a school meeting | No | 22.4 | 23.0 | .887 |
| | Yes | 77.6 | 77.0 | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attend a parent-teacher organization meeting | No | 65.8 | 53.7 | .005** |
| | Yes | 34.2 | 46.3 | |
| Attend parent-teacher conference | No | 41.9 | 38.8 | .468 |
| | Yes | 58.1 | 61.2 | |
| Participate in fundraising | No | 49.4 | 62.3 | .003** |
| | Yes | 50.6 | 37.7 | |
| Serve on school committee | No | 93.4 | 90.6 | .244 |
| | Yes | 6.6 | 9.4 | |
| Meet with guidance counselor | No | 52.0 | 50.0 | .645 |
| | Yes | 48.0 | 50.0 | |
| Receive notes or emails | No | 40.8 | 33.6 | .091$^{+}$ |
| | Yes | 59.2 | 66.4 | |
| Receive newsletters | No | 14.0 | 13.5 | .869 |
| | Yes | 86.0 | 86.5 | |
| Receive phone calls | No | 58.1 | 50.4 | .080$^{+}$ |
| | Yes | 41.9 | 49.6 | |

$^{+}$ $p < .1$; *$p < .05$; ** $p<01$; ***$p<.001$

Table 4.3 examines parental involvement defined by 11 different behaviors that identify events in which parents participated or interacted with the school. Overall, the evidence shows that charter school parents are more involved in school activities and are engaged in more communication mediums (i.e., emails, newsletter, phone calls) than parents of children at traditional public schools.

For instance, a higher percentage of charter school parents (31.1%) serve as a volunteer in comparison to traditional public-school parents (23.3%). Similarly, the percentages of charter school parents (46.3%) and traditional public-school parents (23.3%) who attend parent teacher organization (PTO) meetings are significantly different. Parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences is also higher in charter schools (61.2%) than traditional public schools (58.1%), although differences are not statistically significant. However, more traditional public-school

parents participate in school fundraising (50.6%) than charter school parents (37.7%). Finally, no significant difference was found between charter and traditional public schools in regard to attending events, school meetings, or parent-teacher conferences, and with respect to serving on school committees or meeting with school counselors.

In terms of receiving and acknowledging various forms of communication with school, 66.4% of charter school parents receive notes or emails from their child's school, while only 59.2% of traditional public-school parents receive the same communication. Similarly, there is a significant difference at .1 level between the percentages of charter school and traditional public-school parents who receive phone calls from the school. While 49.6% of charter school parents reported receiving phone calls, only 41.9% of traditional public-school parents said the same. There was, however, no significant difference noted between parents in receiving school newsletters (86% traditional public vs. 86.5% charter). Overall, the use of various modalities of interaction appears to be higher in charter schools.

**Parent Involvement with Out-of-school Activities**

While the previous section demonstrates the differences in school-centric parental involvement, this section focuses on the parent involvement with their child's learning as defined by out-of-school activities. Table 4.4 includes activities parents and students do together that are not necessarily education related but contribute to child's learning and child-parent bonding. The activities mentioned are not directly facilitated by the student's campus and cover participation in events in just the week prior to the data collection. The data in Table 4.4 indicates a few differences in the weekly parent-student activities, as reported by their parents.

Table 4.4

*Parent Involvement with Out-of-school Activities by School Type (Column %)*

| | Parent response | Traditional (n=272) | Charter (n=244)_ | Chi-square test (*p* value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the past week, times child has been told a story | No | 58.8 | 61.5 | .539 |
| | Yes | 41.2 | 38.5 | |
| In the past week, time spent on arts and crafts | No | 77.9 | 78.0 | .996 |
| | Yes | 22.1 | 22.0 | |
| In the past week, played board games | No | 67.6 | 71.7 | .315 |
| | Yes | 32.4 | 28.3 | |
| In the past week, worked on a project | No | 56.1 | 49.6 | .140 |
| | Yes | 43.9 | 50.4 | |
| In the past week, time spent playing sports | No | 38.7 | 37.1 | .708 |
| | Yes | 61.3 | 62.9 | |
| In the past week, discussed time management | No | 30.5 | 20.4 | .009*** |
| | Yes | 69.5 | 79.6 | |
| In the past week, discussed ethnic heritage | No | 44.5 | 38.1 | .143 |
| | Yes | 55.5 | 61.9 | |

$^{+}$ $p < .1$; *$p < .05$; ** p<.01; ***$p$<.001

First, it is important to notice for both parent groups, the highest percentages of parents were involved in time management discussions (70-80%). The largest and the only statistically significant difference between the two groups of parents is in this area, with charter school parents reporting higher involvement in discussing time management as compared to traditional parents. While 79.6% of charter school parents claimed to have discussed time management with their child within the last week, only 69.5% of traditional public-school parents were involved in this activity. Other areas in which charter parents were more involved were working on projects with children throughout the week (50.4% for charter vs. 43.9% for traditional parents), playing sport (62.9% for charter vs. 61.3% for traditional parents), and discussing about ethnic heritage

within the past week (61.9% for charter vs. 55.5% for traditional parents). However, traditional school parents were more likely to be involved in storytelling and playing board games, although differences were not statistically significant.

## Research Question 3

*To what extent do school choice, parents' characteristics, their involvement with school events, and their assessment of school-home communication contribute to the overall level of parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children?*

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict the overall parental satisfaction by a set of independent variables proposed in the analytical framework. The overall parental satisfaction was calculated as an average of satisfaction of several aspects of schooling. Dummy variables were created for the categorical variables. For instance, for highest level of parental education, the high school education category was taken as reference category, and three dummy variables were created for vocational/associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees. For the home ownership variable, being an owner is the reference category. For home language, English spoken at home is the reference category. All involvement variables (i.e., 11 for school events and 7 for out-of-school activities) are dichotomous, so no involvement represents the reference category. Income is a continuous variable. Finally, a continuous variable indicates the overall assessment of school-home communication as an average of several items (e.g., progress between report cards, information on homework help, information on class placement, information on parent's role, and information on college). Table 4.5 presents the results of the linear regression model – unstandardized coefficients (to be used in the regression equation) and their standard errors, the standardized coefficients that indicate the relative strength of each variable or category, and the *p*-value that indicates the statistical significance of t-tests for each

coefficient. Overall, the $R^2_{adj}$=.363indicate that 36% of the variability in the outcome (parental satisfaction) is explained by the regression model.

Table 4.5

*Regression Analysis of Parental Satisfaction*

| Variables | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients Beta | Significance t-tests |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Standard error | | (*p* value) |
| (Constant) | 1.771 | .140 | | <0.001 |
| Charter parents (ref=traditional) | 0.206 | .049 | .161 | <0.001*** |
| Parent Education (ref=high school) | | | | |
| Voc/Assoc degree | -.079 | .065 | -.055 | 0.224 |
| Bachelor degree | -.108 | .078 | -.070 | 0.166 |
| Graduate degree | -.061 | .094 | .032 | .521 |
| Income | .023 | .012 | .104 | .056$^{+}$ |
| Renter (ref=owner) | .120 | .055 | .091 | .030* |
| Home language other than English | -.024 | .070 | -.014 | .734 |
| Overall communication | .432 | .029 | .566 | <.001*** |
| Parent involvement (school) | | | | |
| Attend a school event | -.020 | .059 | -.015 | .729 |
| Serve as a volunteer | .165 | .063 | .114 | .009** |
| Attend a school meeting | .114 | .066 | .074 | .083$^{+}$ |
| Attend a PTO conference | -.037 | .055 | -.028 | .496 |
| Attend parent-teacher conf. | -.043 | .056 | -.033 | .446 |
| Participate in fundraising | .097 | .057 | .075 | .092$^{+}$ |
| Serve on school committee | -.157 | .091 | -.066 | .087$^{+}$ |
| Meet with guidance counselor | -.068 | .051 | -.053 | .184 |
| Receive notes or emails | -.067 | .055 | -.051 | .224 |
| Receive newsletters | .055 | .073 | .029 | .451 |
| Receive phone calls | -.118 | .053 | -.092 | .028* |
| Parent involvement (out-of-school) | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the past week, told a story | -.040 | .050 | -.030 | .426 |
| In the past week, arts and crafts | .069 | .064 | .045 | .279 |
| In the past week, board games | -.060 | .055 | -.043 | .275 |
| In the past week, work project | -.119 | .056 | -.093 | .033* |
| In the past week, playing sports | -.030 | .051 | -.023 | .558 |
| In the past week, time manage | -.051 | .056 | -.035 | .368 |
| In the past week, talk heritage | .033 | .051 | .025 | .522 |
| | $R^2_{adj}$=.363** | | | |

$^{+}$ $p$<.1; *$p$ < .05; ** p<.01; ***$p$<.001

As shown in Table 4.5, by examining the standardized coefficients, the most important predictor of parental satisfaction is the assessed level of school-home communication (beta=.566). This variable is followed by school type (beta=.161), with charter school parents being more satisfied with their children's school. Other significantly positive effects on parental satisfaction are being a renter, higher income, serving as volunteers in school, attending school meetings, and participating in fundraising. Some significantly negative effects on parental satisfaction refer to attending school committees and receiving too many phone calls, as well as having to work with children on projects. Parent education, home language, attending a PTO conference, attending a parent-teacher conference, meeting with the guidance counselor, receiving notes or emails, receiving newsletters, telling the child a story, working with the child on arts and crafts, playing board games together, playing sports, discussing time management, and talking about ethnic heritage are not significant predictors at the .1 level or lower.

Additional exploration of the unstandardized coefficient in Table 4.5 shows that being a charter school parent increases the level of satisfaction by 0.206 points, and an increase in the level of communication by one unit adds up .432 to the satisfaction level. Renting brings an increase of .120 in the level of satisfaction, and one unit increase in income brings an increase of .023 in the level of satisfaction. Within the involvement categories, serving as a volunteer,

attending school meetings, and participating in fundraising were all positively related to parent satisfaction; they increased the level of satisfaction by .165, .114, and .097, respectively.

However, within this same involvement category, serving on a school committee and receiving phone calls were negatively correlated with satisfaction. Serving on a committee led to decreased satisfaction by .157 points, which makes this particular form of school involvement the most negatively associated with parent satisfaction. Receiving phone calls from the school decreased the level of satisfaction by .118 points, though the nature of the phone calls was not assessed, so these phone calls could have in relation to negative incidents. Similarly, parents who reported working on a project with their children within the past week showed a negative association with satisfaction, this form of involvement decreasing satisfaction by .119 points.

In summary, this model predicts that being a charter parent and establishing a high level of school-home communication has a positive effect on parental satisfaction. Renter parents are more likely to show a greater level of satisfaction, and parental income is also a significant predictor of satisfaction. It cannot be suggested that parent involvement as a general category positively correlates to parental satisfaction because this model reveals both positive and negative correlations to satisfaction depending on the type of involvement activity performed by the parent.

Finally, because parents' assessment of school-home communication appeared to be so important in the model, and only the overall communication rather than the separate measures was used in the model, I decided to examine whether each of the communication aspects were correlated with each other and with the overall parental satisfaction. The Cronbach's alpha (.857) has already indicated a high reliability of the communication scale. This is also confirmed by the statistically significant and large correlation coefficients presented in Table 4.6 between the 5

items measuring aspects of school-home communication (i.e., coefficients vary between .456 and .657). In addition, each of the 5 items is highly correlated with the overall parental satisfaction, which is the main outcome of the study (row 6 in the table). The last row shows that the highest correlation of parental satisfaction is related to the information school provides on college (.579), followed by information of student progress through report cards (.450), information on course placement (.433), information on homework help (.415) and, finally, information on the role parents were expected to play in their children's education (.374).

Table 4.6

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for School-home Communication Items*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Progress/report cards | 1 | | | | | |
| 2.Info on HW help | .531*** | 1 | | | | |
| 3.Info on placement | .485*** | .630*** | 1 | | | |
| 4.Info on expected role | .526*** | .613*** | .657*** | 1 | | |
| 5.Information on college | .503*** | .456*** | .544*** | .557*** | 1 | |
| 6.Overall satisfaction | .450*** | .415*** | .433** | .374*** | .579*** | 1 |

$^{+}$ $p<.1$; *$p < .05$; ** $p<.01$; ***$p<.001$

Thus, parent perception of school-home communication proved to be the most important predictor of parent satisfaction with the school. Because these are parents of high school students, it is not surprising information about college is the most appreciated. The model also shows that school-home communication appears to be better valued than various aspects of parent involvement, possibly because the focus is on high school students.

**Summary of Key Findings**

The main assumption of this dissertation is that parents of students enrolled in charter and in traditional high-schools have different involvement behaviors with their children's education,

different response to school's ways to interact with parents, and different levels of satisfaction with school that would explain their school choice. A summary of key findings is presented below, and selected findings are further discussed in Chapter 5.

- There are socio-demographic differences between parents of charter and traditional public high-school students in that charter school parents appear to be less affluent and less educated, while simultaneously more diverse in terms of ethnicity and language.
- Charter school parents were found to be more satisfied with their child's school and school-home communication than traditional public-school parents.
- Charter school parents were found to be more involved with their child's learning at school through means of volunteering, attending PTO meetings, and receiving emails phone calls, while traditional school parents were more involved in fundraising.
- Charter school parents are significantly more likely to be involved in discussing time management with their children as an out-of-school activity not monitored by school.
- The regression model explored the relative contribution of factors to predicting parental satisfaction. First, being a charter parent, homeownership status (parents who are renters) and possessing higher income predicted a higher level of satisfaction with child's school.
- In terms of the relationship between parents' beliefs and behaviors and level of satisfaction, the regression model showed it was parent perception of school-home communication and not parent involvement that was the greatest predictor of parent satisfaction.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

School choice debate has been on the rise since Friedman's 1955 proposal of school vouchers. Particularly, the charter school system has grown rapidly, with the inception of 4,000 schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia between the first charter school in Minnesota in 1991 and the 2004-2005 school year (Forman, 2004; Forman, 2006). Since then, this number has only continued to increase. The National Center for Education Statistics (2021) reported 7,400 charter schools in the U.S. in the 2018-2019 school year. That also accounted for 3.3. million students in the country, which represents a 1.7 million increase from 2009; in contrast, traditional public-school attendance decreased by 0.4 million within the same span of time. Of the 3.3 million charter-school students, just over approximately 500,000 are attending secondary-only charter schools, which translates to grades 7-12 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). The rapid expansion of the charter network and the consequential decrease in traditional public-school enrollment support the urgency to examine how satisfied parents are with their school choice decisions. Accordingly, within the scope of this dissertation, I studied the relationship between parent socio-demographics, level of parental involvement, perception of school-home communications, and level of parental satisfaction with focus on comparing school satisfaction between charter and traditional public high-school parents.

This chapter will begin with a summary of the study results. I will then discuss the usefulness of the theoretical concepts proposed in the study model. The chapter also includes a discussion of the findings as related to the literature on school choice, parent involvement, school-home communication, and parent satisfaction. The chapter will conclude with a

discussion of policy and practice implications, limitations of the current study, recommendations for future research, and the significance of the study.

## Overview of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationships between parental satisfaction with the school chosen for their children, parental involvement in their child's education, assessment of school-home communication, and socio-economic characteristics in an attempt to compare and contrast behaviors and beliefs of charter and traditional public-school parents.

The study was based on secondary analysis of data from the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) on Parent and Family Involvement (PFI) in Education (McQuiggan & Megra, 2017). Much of the existing body of literature surrounding school choice decisions focuses on different factors that are involved in the decision such as location, political support, and marketing (Bifulco & Buerger, 2015; Henig & MacDonald, 2002; Jacobs, 2013 Johnsson & Lindgren, 2010; Lubienski, 2007). One might expect student outcomes to be a driving factor in school choice decisions, but the existing body of literature is inconclusive as to whether students in one type of school outperform the others (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2011; Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Clark et al., 2015; Hanushek et al., 2007; Hoxby et al., 2009; Lubienski, 2007; Zimmer et al., 2012). As a result, this study's purpose was to examine how parent factors may play a role in school choice.

The analytical framework proposed for my research incorporates elements from the parental satisfaction and school choice model proposed by Friedman et al. (2007) who focused on involvement and communication as most important predictors of parental satisfaction. Parental involvement concepts are introduced through Epstein's (1995; 2011) perspective of

partnerships between school and family. Additionally, because parental involvement was hypothesized of being key to parental satisfaction, I proposed to view parental involvement and school choice as intentional investments in cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) made by parents.

The results of the current study indicated that parent perception of school-home communication was actually the most significant predictor of the overall satisfaction with the school, which was higher amongst charter high-school parents than traditional high-school parents. Charter high-school parents were also found to be more involved than their traditional public-school counterparts in the education of their children, with significant differences found in serving as a volunteer, attending PTO meetings, fundraising, and discussing time management. The charter school parents in the study were more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, while simultaneously less educated and less affluent than the traditional public-school parents as well.

**Theoretical Concepts**

The analytical model proposed in the study is guided by Friedman et al.'s (2007) model of parental satisfaction and school choice. The study model also relies on aspects of parent involvement with school events and out-of-school activities based on Epstein's (1995, 2011) research. These studies were useful to operationalize the variables and constructs employed in the study. However, going further, to understand what motivates parents to get involved in their child's education (as part of school choice and further participation), to have expectations, and to assess and show satisfaction with school effectiveness, I will briefly discuss the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of social and cultural capital.

The three forms of cultural capital, which are the embodied state (e.g., cultural tastes and dispositions of the parents), the objectified state (e.g., cultural goods), and the institutionalized state (e.g., educational level of the parents), are inherited forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In this study, I argue that race/ethnicity and home-language factors represented the embodied state of cultural capital because they contribute to the formation of dispositions and habits toward education. Homeownership status and income would serve as indicators of the objectified state of cultural capital. Finally, educational level of the parents can be associated with the institutionalized state of cultural capital.

In this study, charter school parents were more racially and ethnically diverse, with larger proportions of Hispanic students, and more linguistically diverse because more charter school parents reported speaking languages other than English at home. Charter school parents also reported an average income $10,000 below traditional public-school parents, and there were slightly lower percentages of homeowners. Finally, charter school parents were less educated than traditional public-school parents, with a higher proportion having a high-school diploma or below. Thus, all these findings support the fact that the charter school parents possessed less cultural capital than the traditional public-school parents in the context of the dominant culture found in most American schools. This is a significant finding because the less cultural capital parents possess, the less power they have to promote an enhanced academic experience for their children (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). This power imbalance could explain the decision of these parents to look elsewhere than the traditional public-school, which has less diverse, more affluent, and higher educated parents.

Furthermore, if there is an incongruence between the parent's cultural capital and the school's dominant culture, the parent has a reduced ability to secure important social capital

through involvement with the school (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Social capital, which is the composite of actual and potential resources found within a given network, works to increase the inherited cultural capital of the student and parent (Bourdieu, 1986). High-school students with greater amounts of social capital, which comes from the family and community involvement in their education, experienced lower dropout rates (Coleman, 1988). There is also a mutually beneficial relationship for greater parent involvement with the school, as it increases the parent's own social capital to pass down to their children (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Charter parents in my study chose to be involved in their child's education from the beginning by choosing to reject the residency policy and send them to the charter school, which may have empowered the parents to become even more involved at school, thus resulting in an increase of social capital (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011; Mather & Johnson, 2000).

Additionally, social capital is comprised of the relationships between people in a given social network (Bourdieu, 1986; Parcel & Dufur, 2001) such as school and community. A consistent flow of positive instances as part of the school-home communication strengthens trust between parents and teachers and improves parent involvement (Houri et al., 2020; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015). Strong levels of communication and trust breed a closer relationship between teachers and parents, thereby increasing the social capital of the parents. The parent's social capital would also increase as a result of greater involvement at school, from the new relationships with faculty, along with relationships from other parents, which is also a direct result from more effective school-home communication.

Taken together, these elements underscore the importance of the student's attendance at a school that allows for parents of these demographics who wield less cultural capital to build important social capital. The choice to attend a charter school provided this opportunity for these

parents, which, in turn, led to more involvement and satisfaction with the child's school than the traditional public-school parents. The matter of school choice really acted as investments of capital for these parents, which makes it clear as to why charter school parents would be more satisfied with the school choice they made for their children.

## Discussion of Findings

As a whole, charter school parents were found to be more satisfied with their child's school than traditional public-school parents. These results aligned with research literature (Barrows et al., 2017; Buckley & Schneider, 2006; Gleason et al., 2010; Mather & Johnson, 2000). They were also more involved in school activities and interacted more with schools and teachers, as found in existing literature (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Hamlin, 2021). However, the study showed that parents' perceptions of school-home communication and not parent involvement acted as the greater predictor of parent satisfaction, adding further insight to the findings of Friedman et al.'s (2007) study naming involvement and communication as the greatest predictors of satisfaction. In this section, I will discuss separately some of the main findings in relation to existing literature.

### Parental Involvement

It is unsurprising that charter school parents were found to be more involved than the traditional public-school parents, given that making the decision to send a child to charter school is one of Epstein's (1995) six forms of parent involvement methods (collaborating with the community) within and of itself. Additionally, previous literature points out that market theory assumes parents who actively choose their child's school will be more involved in the child's education because they contribute a greater investment of time, energy, and, sometimes, fees (Bauch & Goldring, 1995).

In terms of volunteering as a form of involvement, my study shows that more charter high-school parents served as a volunteer at the school than traditional public high-school parents. Charter school parents were also more active in attending parent -teacher organization (PTO) meetings. This is an important finding that confirms existing literature that suggests students in schools with active PTOs see strong gains in student achievement compared to those without active PTOs by facilitating communication avenues that draw attention to struggling students, which allows for the creation of resources to support them (Coleman, 1988; Murray et al., 2019). At the same time, PTOs can reinforce existing sociocultural inequities within schools through the promotion of instructional patterns that grow these inequities (Murray et al., 2019; Posey-Maddox et al., 2014).

PTOs are defined as parent-led organizations with the goal of creating structures to collectively communicate with school leaders, thereby taking a more active role in the decision-making processes of the school. PTOs also allow for parents to contribute their time, money, and personal expertise into their children's schools, which, in theory, renders these organizations an important source of social capital (Murray et al., 2019). These organizations are especially important in schools with more diverse, less affluent populations, such as the charter schools in the study, because effective family-school relations are hinged on the need for the school and family to share power, rather than ignoring power dynamics found within these schools (Cooper, 2007). Furthermore, these organizations create the space for diverse parents and the school faculty to share views and collaboratively solve self-identified challenges of the school community in order to create effective learning opportunities for students (Bryk, 2010; Noguera, 2001). However, even in the charter schools in my study, less than half of the parents reported participating in PTO meetings, so it is unclear if the PTOs at the charter schools are actually

building social capital as assumed, or if there is a furthering of social inequities occurring, even though the White, college-educated parents are in the minority of these schools.

Regardless, serving as a volunteer, attending school meetings, and participating in fundraising were all factors positively correlated to parent satisfaction for both groups of parents, corroborating the widely accepted, asset-based view that parents want to be involved in promoting their child's success (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011). While an extensive body of modern literature points to the need to emphasize partnership activities like two-way communication, learning at home and school, and shared decision making (Epstein, 2011), Christenson et al.'s (1997) study suggested comfort with the highly critiqued traditional parent involvement activities. The present findings seem to support their research almost 25 years later. The fact that these parent involvement activities increase satisfaction also aligns with the notion that parent involvement is higher when parents feel empowered, the two highest stages of parent empowerment including volunteering and advocacy-based activities (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Empowerment also stems from involvement activities and programs that are responsive to family needs, that allow parents opportunities to contribute to their child's development and academic progress, and that value parents as active partners in their commitments and contributions (Fruchter et al., 1992). If volunteering, attending meetings, and fundraising efforts meet criteria for empowerment, it makes sense for the activities to also contribute to parental satisfaction.

However, a similar form of involvement – serving on a school committee –led to a decrease in parental satisfaction. Parents in the Christenson et al.'s (1997) study ranked the opportunity to serve on a team or board with educators to make important school-wide decisions as 27 out of 33 of desirable involvement activities; meanwhile, the opportunity to make joint decisions with the school ranked higher at number 13. Thus, the size and scope, and possibly

time commitment, involved in serving on a school committee can influence the parent's perception of being involved on said committee.

In terms of out-of-school parental involvement types that are expected to strengthen parent-child relationships and contribute to learning at home, differences between charter school and traditional public-school parents were only statistically significant in the category of parent-child discussions on time management. These findings are consistent with Park and Holloway's (2013) study that found parents of higher socioeconomic status are less involved at home than parents of lower socioeconomic status because the charter parents in the study were less educated and less affluent. Overall, limited out-of-school involvement for all parents in the study could be blamed on the fact that at the high-school level, parents begin to feel less able to assist as the curriculum becomes more advanced, especially with parents who have lower levels of educator attainment (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

The study findings also show differences in the exchange of information between school and parents that maintain their involvement with school. Charter high-school parents received significantly more notes or emails from their child's school and more phone calls from the school when compared to traditional public-school parents. This intensive communication may not contribute to parental satisfaction, which explains why receiving phone calls from the school was a significant predictor of dissatisfaction. This finding could be attributed to the fact that teachers tend to call home more frequently as a reaction to episodes of student behavior infractions, which decreases trust and builds barriers between teachers and parents (Halsey, 2004; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015). Thus, the phone calls received by parents may have been more deficit-based, thereby, decreasing satisfaction.

**Parental Satisfaction**

Perhaps the most important findings of this study, though, are the results pertaining to the factors affecting parent satisfaction. Just as it was not surprising that charter school parents were more involved, it was equally predictable that charter school parents would be more satisfied given that they made the choice to send their children to these schools. Though they expressed an overall high level of satisfaction, charter school parents were the least satisfied with staff/parent interaction, highlighting the need for further work to build positive relationships between the two partners. The dissatisfaction by parents when interacting with school faculty is not surprising, given the charter school parents in the study were more ethnically and racially diverse, and existing literature indicates parents often feel stigmatized from racial biases, and teacher perceptions of parents influence their communication efforts (Cherng, 2016; McKay et. Al, 2003). Charter school parents reported their highest levels of satisfaction with academic standards, which suggests parents care about the quality of school academics and is consistent with the findings of Patrikakou and Weissberg (2000).

As far as parent demographics, two of the four socio-demographic variables (i.e., home language, highest educational attainment, income level, and homeownership status) proved to significantly impact parent satisfaction. Renting, rather than owning a home, along with an increase in income, both positively affected parental satisfaction. When students are moved into a school that provides a dramatic improvement to quality education, this can have a positive effect on student outcomes, and because charter school enrollment is not geographically dependent, charter schools may provide students this rare opportunity (Crowley, 2003). Choosing schools that meet parents' academic and social criteria is easier for renters, who are three times more likely to move than homeowners (Crowley, 2003). According to Crowley's

(2003) findings, lower-class families are more transient, and therefore, more likely to be renters. On the other hand, charter schools attract less affluent families, which contrasts with previous findings by Lubienski (2007). Although parental satisfaction is higher among more affluent parents, there is likely some compensation between economic affluence and freedom to move (and to choose a school) that control the effect of these two factors on satisfaction.

A surprising study finding was that parents' education had no significant effect on parental satisfaction, although it differentiated the two parent groups, with charter schools including higher percentage of less educated parents. This did not align with what I expected to find based on previous research. Park and Holloway (2013) found mothers' education to be one of the two most important factors in predicting school-based parent involvement, and Friedman et al. (2007) stated involvement was one of the most important predictors of satisfaction. Furthermore, Park and Holloway (2013) found a positive relationship between mothers having a college degree and perceiving the school to be more welcoming. Thus, I anticipated that higher education levels of parents correlated to higher levels of satisfaction. Given the charter parents in this study were more satisfied but less educated, I concluded the opposite.

The study findings also show that charter schools attract higher percentages of minority groups, and because charter school parents are more satisfied with school, this likely correspond to minority parents. These findings dispel the notion that parents of racial and ethnic minority groups are less satisfied than those of White, non-Hispanic parents with the school attended by their children (Friedman et al., 2006). Instead, they support the notion that greater income levels work to erase the effect of a racial or ethnic affiliation on the parents' actions and beliefs (Lareau, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Park & Holloway, 2013).

### School-Home Communication

The unique finding of this study, though, is that school-home communication is the strongest determinant of parental satisfaction. Forms of school-home communication included information on student progress between report cards, homework help, class placement, expected role by parents, and information about college, and each was separately correlated with parental satisfaction.

This finding is consistent with previous literature that highlights how parents appreciate consistent communication with the school and how direct teacher-parent communication strengthens trust (Borup et al., 2015; Houri et al., 2020; Miretzky, 2004, Reynolds et al., 2015). Particularly, Cox (2005) found two-way communication forms to be perceived as the most effective way to communicate, empowering the parents and building their trust in school; this is significant to the current study because this type of communication flow could be applicable to all of the communicative efforts reported in the data. As mentioned earlier, parents appreciated more proactive forms of communication, so if teachers were communicating student progress before a failing report card, it would only boost parent satisfaction. Additionally, Reynolds et al. (2014) pointed to a contrasting perception of the teacher vs. parent role, finding that teachers focus on school-home communication while parents are more worried about non-school-centric factors affecting their child such as psychological motivators. The current study proved that despite what parents might believe is the best form of participation for them, they still treasure school-home communication above all else.

## Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study has several limitations and delimitations. First, a demographic delimitation for this study is that it focused on high-school parents. Given that parent involvement already

decreases in high-school, it is still questionable as to whether communication or involvement would be the strongest predictor of satisfaction at the lower levels (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). It is possible that parents are more involved with children's education at lower school levels and are switching focus to communication and receiving information when children grow older and start to prepare to make post-high-school choices.

A study limitation is caused by the relatively small sample size of charter school parents. To create comparable samples, the traditional public-school parents were selected through random sampling. Although random sampling is considered a fair way of selecting a representative sample from the population, more accurate means of sampling to match specific characteristics of the two samples could have been employed (Sharma, 2017).

Another limitation revolves around not including the analysis factors recognized in the literature to associate with parental involvement and satisfaction. Mainly, there is a lack of data about student achievement in the NCES dataset. The survey does ask parents if they are satisfied with the academic standards of the school, but there is no data gathered about the achievement of the child. Past studies have shown a strong association between achievement of students and satisfaction of parents (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). Without individual student achievement data, the study could not include an important element contributing to the parent's level of satisfaction. Especially when studying the beliefs and behaviors of high-school parents, who are preoccupied about their children's college and career pathways, the child's success at school is an important variable at play in terms of satisfaction.

Finally, the study does not consider when the parents enrolled their children in the charter school. If these parents have experienced, at some point, the traditional public-school

environment, it would be imperative to understand their changing patterns of behavior towards involvement after switching schools. Right now, this study determines that charter school parents are more involved but lacks to connect this behavior with parents' prior experiences. Without information about the past behaviors of these parents, it remains to be seen whether the parents in question are just more intrinsically motivated to be involved in their child's learning or if satisfaction stemming from school choice makes the difference. Similarly, without knowing how long the students and parents have been a part of the charter system, it is unclear if that satisfaction is the result of a "newness" factor or if it could have been sustained over time.

## Implications for Policy and Practice

In her model for school, family and community partnerships, Epstein (2011) asserts that these partnerships must emphasize collaboration in order to distribute knowledge, solve problems, celebrate victories, and guide students, as these are all shared responsibilities between the school, family, and community. The results of this research can help guide practitioners in both types of school in forging these partnerships. For charter school administrators, the findings can enable them to more effectively advertise and recruit new students. On a similar note, the findings can help traditional public-school administrators retain students by implementing new practices especially in school-home communication, to increase parent satisfaction.

This study also may guide school administrators in any of the school systems to develop their own surveys and collect data from parents with focus on satisfaction with school, parental involvement, and school-home communication. One way for schools to gather individualized data is to conduct a needs assessment that asks parents about the activities they would find most useful to them to support their children, thereby increasing involvement and satisfaction. A climate survey could also be beneficial, as it would allow parents to specify the type of

communication they appreciate or score, and it may provide an explanation as to why the satisfaction rates for parent/staff interactions are lower. These types of parent surveys would enhance the shared planning and decision-making process, and by making parents feel heard, they can also be measures that boost overall satisfaction (Comer, 1984).

Finally, there are policy level implications generated by this study. To reach the comprehensive partnership Epstein (2011) describes, teachers need time and training. Historically, efforts to forge partnerships with families have been hindered by lack of time, bureaucratic structures, and lack of training, especially in the way of serving diverse parents with an asset-based approach (i.e., focusing on the strengths parents have to offer) (Swap, 1993). Schools need to plan time for teachers to make personal, meaningful connections with parents during and outside of school hours, and teacher training programs need to more adequately equip future educators with asset-based approaches to family engagement. Such actions cannot be simply initiated by school districts but require policies that support developing and implementing such practice. For instance, some work has been done at the state and federal level to enact laws requiring school districts or school boards to create family engagement policies. More work needs to be done to continue defining the boundaries and responsibilities of such partnerships, and particularly in today's climate, offer support and guidance on how to build trust and respect on both sides of the partnership.

## Recommendations for Further Research

There are three major areas in which I believe these findings should be explored in future research. First, given this was a quantitative study, the findings are limited in revealing exactly what makes parents more involved with school and out-of-school specific activities along with what helps them ensure an effective school-home communication takes place. A qualitative

study that allowed parents to express what specifically made them more involved and satisfied with school could inform researchers and school administrators on elements to focus their attention in boosting parental involvement and satisfaction at the high-school level. Additionally, it would be interesting to hear from the charter-school parents if any of the forms of involvement, communication, and satisfaction used so far in research were related to their own experiences and decisions to leave a traditional public school. On the same note, if traditional public-school parents are less satisfied, a qualitative study could explore if they have considered a different school choice and, if not, why they stay despite the dissatisfaction.

Another area that can be explored concerns the type of school-home communication received by the parent. By focusing on communication as a predictor of satisfaction, future research could delineate the types of communication most satisfying to parents, along with examining how the lack of communication contributes to school choice decisions.

Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct a similar comparative study on school satisfaction from a student perspective, especially if the research would focus on autonomous, independent adolescents. Epstein (2011) paints a picture of what a "family-like school" entails, which is a school that advocates for students, provides a sense of belonging to a "school family," and celebrates uniqueness of individuals (p.36). Epstein's model of school-like families and family-like schools could be used to examine not only student satisfaction with school but also their perceptions of who supports them in their learning.

Finally, an integral component of parent involvement and school choice decisions, the community, should be also included in further research. Over time, Epstein's model (2011) of school, family, and community partnerships has evolved to place an expanded emphasis on the broader community's duty to be more inclusive to diverse backgrounds. Future research should

consider the utilization of community partnerships within the school catchment areas of charter and traditional-public schools in order to examine the impact of the network of resources within the community on parent satisfaction with the school of choice.

## Significance of the Study

This study is an important addition to the literature surrounding parental satisfaction with school because it underscores the importance of effective communication between the school and the parents. It also highlights work still to be done in the area of parent and school personnel interaction, especially on campuses with high levels of minorities or economically disadvantaged families. Moreover, being that the study focuses on high-school parents, it emphasizes that the desire for effective school-home communication does not decrease even as students gain autonomy and independence as they approach adulthood.

Concerning the contribution to the literature on parent involvement, this study highlights the need to maintain traditional forms of school-based involvement as the main way for parents to influence their children's education. The current movement towards building school-parents partnerships suggests approaching activities with a more collaborative, asset-based view of the parents, allowing for the recognition of their out-of-school contributions.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the discussion on school choice, which is becoming increasingly relevant in the politics of K-12 education. As the charter school network expands while the public schools simultaneously see decreases in enrollment, the study findings provide K-12 public education leaders with insight into why parents might be opting to leave or to stay, along with measures they can take to increase parent satisfaction at their assigned public campus, particularly by means of strong communication and relationships between school and home.

## Conclusion

I initiated this research because of my own experiences as an educator who routinely lost my highest achieving students to area charter-schools and my desire to better understand the factors that contribute to parent satisfaction with the school chosen for their children. Though I originally hypothesized that parent involvement would be the greatest predictor of satisfaction, the study actually revealed the parent's perception of school-home communication efforts to be the greatest contributor to parental satisfaction. This research will encourage administrators and educators alike to focus on the most effective forms of communication with parents. Moreover, if used to guide implementation of effective practices, these findings can boost parent satisfaction in traditional public-schools, which is lower than in charter schools – an assumption I previously held that was confirmed by the study.

Additionally, the study did reveal significant socio-demographic differences between parents of charter high-school and traditional public high-school students. Generally, charter school students in the study were more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, and they came from households of lower incomes with less-educated parents. These demographics explain why parents may be seeking better educational opportunities for their children hoping schools will be able to provide support and guidance they may lack at home. Charter school parents are also more involved, satisfied, and have a more positive assessment of school-home communication efforts than traditional public-school parents at the high-school level, which reveals their trust in schools.

As parents become more and more empowered to take advantage of their right to school choice, school practitioners need more research about what parents are looking for in their

partnerships with the school. Thus, this research is timely, relevant, and has significant implications on school choice decisions.

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# Appendix 1

Traditional and Charter Schools Data

Table A1 presents enrollment data to compare change over time by school type and grade level.

*Table A1*.

*Traditional public and charter school enrollment, by grade level: Fall 2000 and Fall 2016*

| Public charter status and level | Enrollment, Fall 2000 | Enrollment, Fall 2016 | Percent change in enrollment, 2000 to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional public, total | 46,612,000 | 47,264,000 | 1.4 |
| Elementary | 30,424,000 | 30,621,000 | 0.6 |
| Secondary | 14,959,000 | 15,294,000 | 2.2 |
| Combined | 1,149,000 | 1,342,000 | 16.7 |
| Charter, total | 448,000 | 3,010,000 | 571.4 |
| Elementary | 249,000 | 1,512,000 | 506.9 |
| Secondary | 80,000 | 504,000 | 533.6 |
| Combined | 117,000 | 994,000 | 746.9 |

*Note*. Adapted from "*School Choice in the United States: 2019* (NCES 2019-106)," by Wang, Rathbun, and Musu. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Table A2 shows a distribution of school type locale and region for traditional public schools and charter schools. Data show the large percentage of urban charter schools (56%).

*Table A2.*

*Percentage distribution of traditional public schools and charter schools, by school locale and region: 2016-2017*

| | Traditional Public School (%) | Charter School (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Locale | | |
| City | 25 | 56 |
| Suburban | 32 | 26 |
| Town | 14 | 6 |
| Rural | 29 | 11 |
| Region | | |
| Northeast | 16 | 10 |
| Midwest | 26 | 20 |
| South | 35 | 33 |
| West | 23 | 37 |

*Note*. Adapted from "*School Choice in the United States: 2019* (NCES 2019-106)," by Wang, Rathbun, and Musu. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Table A3 provides information about charter school enrollment by state.

*Table A3.*

*Charter school enrollment by state: Selected years 2000-01 and 2016-17*

| | Number of charter schools | | Enrollments in charter school | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2000-2001 | 2016-2017 | 2000-2001 | 2016-2017 |
| United States | 1,993 | 7,011 | 448,343 | 3,010,287 |
| Alabama | 0 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| Alaska | 19 | 28 | 2,594 | 6,677 |
| Arizona | 313 | 550 | 45,596 | 185,588 |
| Arkansas | 3 | 75 | 708 | 27,896 |
| California | 302 | 1,248 | 115,582 | 602,837 |
| Colorado | 77 | 238 | 20,155 | 114,694 |
| Connecticut | 16 | 24 | 2,429 | 9,573 |
| Delaware | 7 | 27 | 2,716 | 14,722 |
| Washington DC | 33 | 110 | NA | 37,151 |
| Florida | 148 | 655 | 26,893 | 283,560 |
| Georgia | 30 | 84 | 20,066 | 66,905 |
| Hawaii | 6 | 34 | 1,343 | 10,669 |
| Idaho | 9 | 54 | 1,083 | 20,579 |
| Illinois | 20 | 64 | 7,552 | 65,169 |
| Indiana | 0 | 88 | 0 | 43,079 |
| Iowa | 0 | 3 | 0 | 398 |
| Kansas | 1 | 10 | 67 | 3,159 |
| Kentucky | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Louisiana | 19 | 151 | 3,212 | 79,022 |
| Maine | 1 | 9 | 154 | 1,955 |
| Maryland | 0 | 49 | 0 | 22,366 |
| Massachusetts | 41 | 78 | 13,712 | 42,596 |
| Michigan | 205 | 376 | 54,751 | 147,061 |
| Minnesota | 73 | 220 | 9,395 | 54,211 |
| Mississippi | 1 | 3 | 367 | 523 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Missouri | 21 | 72 | 7,061 | 22,803 |
| Montana | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nebraska | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nevada | 8 | 49 | 1,255 | 40,074 |
| New Hampshire | 0 | 31 | 0 | 3,422 |
| New Jersey | 53 | 88 | 10,179 | 46,274 |
| New Mexico | 10 | 99 | 1,335 | 25,139 |
| New York | 38 | 267 | 0 | 128,784 |
| North Carolina | 90 | 167 | 15,523 | 92,281 |
| North Dakota | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ohio | 66 | 362 | 14,745 | 116,279 |
| Oklahoma | 6 | 48 | 1,208 | 24,248 |
| Oregon | 12 | 124 | 559 | 32,323 |
| Pennsylvania | 65 | 179 | 18,981 | 132,979 |
| Rhode Island | 3 | 30 | 557 | 8,137 |
| South Carolina | 8 | 70 | 484 | 32,343 |
| South Dakota | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 0 | 104 | 0 | 34,984 |
| Texas | 201 | 753 | 37,978 | 310,846 |
| Utah | 8 | 124 | 537 | 71,417 |
| Vermont | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Virgina | 2 | 8 | 55 | 1,176 |
| Washington | 0 | 8 | 0 | 1,676 |
| West Virginia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wisconsin | 78 | 237 | 9,511 | 44,209 |
| Wyoming | 0 | 5 | 0 | 503 |

*Note*. NA -- Not available or not provided. Adapted from Wang, Rathbun, and Musu (2019).

## Appendix 2

Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey

In 2016, a nationally representative sample of parents received the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey. The single stage cross-sectional survey was conducted by the National Household Education Surveys Programs to collect data through mail addressed-based paper surveys. The survey is considered single stage because the NHES had access through the Department of Education to a list of students that permitted a random sampling selection. The survey gathered information about students under 20 years of age enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12. The student was selected at random by NHES and indicated on the survey in the case of multiple students residing in the same home. The questionnaire was mailed to households in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A screener survey was sent out first and based on the screener 206,000 households were selected. The response rate was 66.4 percent. There were 14,075 families who responded with completed surveys, of which 13,523 enrolled in some form of direct educational program and 552 were homeschooled students. The 14,075 students whose parents responded correspond to a population of 53.2 million students.