PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND SATISFACTION WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS-EVIDENCE FROM A MIDWESTERN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
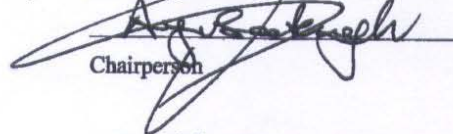
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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of EdD in Education Administration.
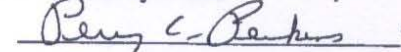
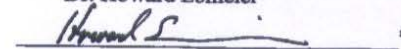Dr. Argun Saatcioglu

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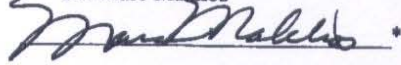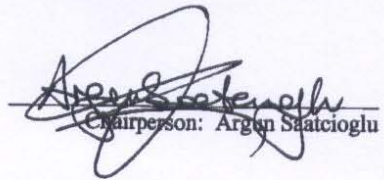
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2

ABSTRACT

The topic of this study is to determine what the parental expectations are for charter schools and whether or not those parents are satisfied given those expectations. This study focuses on three central questions: First, what are the parental expectations that are related to satisfaction with charter schools? Second, are some parental expectations more important than others in predicting satisfaction? And third, does the parental expectation-satisfaction relationship vary by key family characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, education, or socioeconomic status (SES)? The study focused on parents of students who attended charter schools in a typical Midwestern city. Surveys where distributed and collected at seven different charter schools with students ranging from K-12. The study found that in looking at 15 various expectation criteria that they could be narrowed down to3 essential areas: academics, school context, and extra-curricular activities. In analyzing these three essential areas the study found that charter parents have the highest expectations for academics but also have very high expectations for school context as well as extracurricular activities. In addition the study found that white parents had the highest satisfaction levels with academics, blacks had the highest satisfaction levels with school context and Hispanic parents got the most satisfaction from their schools through extracurricular activities. These findings could have important implications on how charters might tend to attract parents and for regular public schools to meet the needs of their current and potential students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of the hard work and dedication of many people at the University of Kansas. I am sure I am no different than many other graduate students in that I was not sure if this day would ever come. However, with the assistance of my advisor Dr. Argun Saaticioglu I will realize my dream of "walking down the hill". He held my hand through this long and tiresome experience. He was very patient with me and suggested many different improvements to the research. I feel incredible lucky to have had the experience of working with such a dedicated and detailed professor. I truly do not think I would have finished in this time frame without him. In addition to Dr. Saatcioglu I would like to thank all of the other professors within the ELPS program. The knowledge I gained from their classes has assisted me in my career and will continue to as I advance.

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To my colleagues in my cohort, I would also say thanks for your guidance and experiences that you brought to our group. I think we learned a lot from each other and we provided each other tremendous support throughout this grueling process. I would especially thank my friend Randi Platko who provided friendship and guidance especially in the last couple of years.

My loving parents have always placed such an emphasis on education and have done everything they can to make sure that I have the opportunities that they didn't. The completion of this degree and this project is a celebration of what can be accomplished by hard work, dedication, love and support. I thank my parents for continually supplying me with the tools to succeed.

It is my hope that my love of education, teaching and learning is passed on to my daughters Sara and Anna. They are the best thing that I have ever done. Each of them holds so much promise and I hope that through this experience of me completing this degree they are able to see how important it is to be educated in making your life better and more complete.

Finally, my most sincere thanks go to my wife and best friend Keri. No one has made more sacrifices over the last four years than she has. Not only has she taken care of our family during this time but she has served as a cheerleader for me and served as my rock; she would never let me quit. To this day she remains the best educator I have ever met and is certainly much more intelligent than I. It is because of her that our family has made it through the last four years. Congratulations goes to both of us "K", WE DID IT!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

<u>Introduction</u>

This dissertation addresses the question of why parents choose charter schools and maybe more importantly, are those charter schools satisfying those expectations? According to Armor and Peiser from their 1998 study of Massachusetts inter-district choice programs, parents are concerned about high academic standards, curriculum and facilities. In a more recent study of Texas charter schools, researchers found similar results. Independent of racial/ethnic or income subgroup the respondents listed the following as important factors in choosing their charter school: hope of a better education, smaller class sizes, the schools would be safer and location of the school (Kleitz, et. al, 2000). In addition the same study mentions that friends was an important factor for each sub-group except "low-income".   Finally, Judy Jackson mentions in her study that the factors that influence parental choice are: "environment—smaller classes, increased structure and discipline, and parent-teacher communication and involvement" (pg. 40). This study will look at these factors and others while analyzing qualitative responses to determine whether or not the charter schools surveyed are actually meeting the expressed desires of parents and students that attend their schools. The research on whether parents are satisfied is thin and therefore will be a major contribution to this already existing debate.

Charters are increasingly viewed as a promising solution to parents in underperforming urban school districts. What is troubling though is that for some parents and especially poor nonwhite parents these choices many times do not revolve around academic excellence (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). Instead parents choose their child's school based on: availability of day care, convenience, social factors and the range and quality of interscholastic sports (Schneider and Buckley, 2002). There is much debate on this topic and many critics believe that

charters do not outperform their public school counterpart. Bettinger in his 2005 study speaks at length as to how charter schools do not perform better academically. He says that charter student academic achievement does not improve more rapidly than nearby public schools (pg.134). He adds that in looking at standardized test scores he finds that charter schools perform no higher and many times do worse. Even in the face of studies like this, charter schools "sell" that they will improve academic outcomes.

The conventional assumption that charter schools satisfy parents' expectations simply because the parents choose to leave the regular public schools involves two interrelated problems. First, although charter parents tend to be more satisfied with their schools in a general sense, some expectations may be related to overall satisfaction more strongly than others, while others may be less important (Hoxby, 2003). Overlooking such patterns limits insights on the ways that charter schools attract parents. It may also limit potential efforts to help charters address parental demands more effectively.

The second problem is that a shortage of insights on the variety of parents' expectations as they relate to satisfaction with charters may limit efforts to improve regular public schools. Charters are, after all, meant in part to stimulate reform among regular schools (Hoxby, 2003). Thus, understanding the particular expectations that are strongly associated with charter parents' satisfaction can help inform other schools on key areas of improvement so that they can effectively compete with charters. This would also contribute to the debate on the type of resources and initiatives that regular schools need to improve in relevant ways, and on the extent to which such improvements can be accomplished in the current policy context.

Charter academic research is inconsistent, and the voice of the parent needs to be brought back into the debate. This is a polarizing topic because all schools in today's economic culture

are competing for students and the dollars that are attached to their enrollment. Even if it can be assumed that choice schools have the students best interest at heart; this study is important in that it can possibly dispel some myths as it relates to the actual benefits of choice programs such as charter schools.

This study focuses on three central questions: First, what are the parental expectations that are related to satisfaction with charter schools? Second, are some parental expectations more important than others in predicting satisfaction? And third, does the parental expectation-satisfaction relationship vary by key family characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, education, or socioeconomic status (SES)? Since such background factors are typically related to parental preferences and involvement in children's education, these factors may have important implications for expectations from and satisfaction with charter schools (Bach & Goldring, 1995).

The majority of research on charter schools focuses on whether charters surpass regular public schools in academic achievement, but less attention is paid to the potentially greater diversity of parental expectations, and the variation in parental satisfaction (Buckley & Schneider, 2009). There are even fewer studies on the relationship of how different parental expectations predict satisfaction (Buckley & Schneider, 2009). I address this gap by examining survey data from nearly 400 parents at seven different charter schools in a large Midwestern city school district. The survey focuses on parents' expectations for choosing charters and on their subsequent satisfaction levels. While all respondents are residents of the same school district, there is considerable variation among them in terms of race/ethnicity, SES, education, and family structure. The data also includes parents' responses to an open-ended question on what they feel needs to improve in charter schools.

Chapter 2
Review of Literature

2.1 What is the voice of the parent?

The objective of this study is to bring the voice of the parent back into the debate and to determine what parental expectations are unmet? Charters are based within the market metaphor; the idea that parents and students will be active consumers and will "shop around" (Schneider et al., 1998). It assumes that parents will be informed consumers; weighing out all available options in their child's education. However, we know that not all parents choose the same way. According to Goldring and Rowley choosers differ from non-choosers in five important ways: demographics, satisfaction with previous school, parental involvement, educational priorities and social networks (2006). They also add that parental choose in school and how they choose differs along education level, family income and racial lines. At the heart of the school choice debate is parental preference, but are charter schools actually meeting the needs of the parents and students and are they making informed decisions in the first place?

2.2 More and more pressure is placed on public schools (testing and satisfaction)…the same criteria should pertain to charter schools (parental voice)

In today's age of high stakes testing public schools are under more and more pressure to perform and to satisfy both parent and student needs. When public schools "fail" parents are often times given the option of selecting a choice alternative. But shouldn't the same criteria pertain to charters and other choice schools as well? Supporters of charters will point to the vision of the originators of charter schools; Albert Shanker and Ray Budde. These two men both spoke of how charters would be accountable and that the "charter" would be extended or revoked based on the performance of the school (Shanker, 1988). However, according to 2009 research by Stein, Goldring and Cravens, parents are not basing their decisions on AYP data. "The

majority of parents and students are leaving traditional public schools that did not pass AYP in the year prior to their move (65 percent). This may indicate dissatisfaction on the part of parents and students with the academic quality of their previous school as a possible mechanism for the choice to switch to a charter public school. However, only one third of students on average, across racial-ethnic groups, choose to enroll in a charter that passed AYP. 32.5% of parents and students choose to enroll in charter schools that are new and therefore have no AYP designation." (pg.24). This is further proof that parents are not informed consumers. This is not said to be critical of parents and their choice. They simply do not have the means or the time to truly inform themselves. They base their choices on "propaganda' from choice programs and the fact that many times they are deeply dissatisfied with their current school.

These same two authors state that parents determine quality of school using reasons other than AYP or academic performance. They rely on "informal social networks" to make their choices (Smerekar and Goldring, 1999). What they believe to be a good school is based on their social network not on facts or data. They go on to say that few parents understand test scores and are unaware of AYP status. Because of the reasons listed here; these researchers believe that parents do not really choose schools based on actual academic performance. Rather, parents say they are choosing for academic reasons but clearly have other unidentified rationale. Since academics is not the true reason for choosing, the goal of this research will be to identify patterns of choice and question why charters are not held to the same high stakes standards as "failing" public schools.

2.3 What is school choice in general?

School choice is the ability of parents to choice where to send their child to school outside of their traditionally assigned public school. These choices ranged from inter and intra

district choice (Schneider & Buckley, 2002) to tax credits, vouchers, magnet schools and finally charter schools. Essentially school choice proponents speak to the parent as a "citizen consumer" in the hopes that this market based system of education will lead to more competition and better schools as a whole.

The goals and arguments for school choice are pretty well centralized and can be summed up in the writings from many different authors. However, according to Walberg in his book *School Choice: the findings,* the proponents of vouchers had many goals:

- Vouchers would improve academic achievement of students attending choice schools

- Vouchers would make all schools more productive and desirable

- Vouchers would bring about competition, raising the level of all schools

Vouchers would also encourage parents of choice schools to participate more in their children's schooling…this too would lead to increased student learning.

Other authors chime in arguing against the establishment that exists in public education. Eric Hanusheck in his writing, *Milton Friedman's Unfinished Business*, asks the question, "Why are the schools tougher to crack than the walls of the communist bloc?" (Hanucheck, 2007, p.42). He further argues that public schools are a perfect example of a monopoly and that the government once had a role in education but should now find its way out of them. "Although governments may want to finance schools for a variety of reasons—externalities, economies of scale, income distribution, what have you—it does not have to do the actual production" (Hanusheck, 2007, p.42). Hanusheck continues his argument along the same lines, as do all who favor a choice program, and that is that the current public school system is failing because there is no existing competition. "The monopoly supplier has done just what monopolists do: Create too little output and charge too much" (Hanusheck, 2007, p.45).

John Chubb and Terry Moe are two individuals who have pushed for voucher programs for a while now. Their belief is that better schools will be created through more competition. They disagree with the current set up of public school systems in that these schools are by nature very bureaucratic. They disagree with other forms of school reform such as using more money on public schools and establishing more controls (Chubb & Moe, 1990). What they advocate for is doing away with the current bureaucratic system of education and establishing more school choice; a market based system (Chubb & Moe, 1990). The authors argue that the only way to truly reform schools is to provide "true choice" not a pseudo version of it.

What is somewhat shocking is that the opponents against school choice today where once the proponents of yesterday. We have seen school choice take many different forms throughout the history of schools in the United States. Forman argues that school choice began during the reconstruction with blacks opening and running their own schools. It continued with free schools and freedom schools of the 1950s and 60s. After that came the community control movement, which sought to deinstitutionalize America's public schools (Forman, 2005). School Choice started as a liberal push to improve the education system for the nation's poor and minorities.

In today's age of school choice the opponents are obvious and they are vocal. These opponents include but are not limited to: public school boards, teachers unions, and other public-sector unions (Walberg, 2007). These groups oppose school choice for one main reason and that is that they "fear that school choice will divert tax dollars from the budget's of traditional public schools" (Walberg, 2007, p.51). Although this is one reason why these groups oppose school choice there are many others, which point more towards the educational and cultural issues that school choice would affect as well. In fairness towards shedding light on

both sides of this issue it is important to address these political and economic facts. Many point

to the fact that public schools in their current form are a huge part of any city's employment

base. This might be best explained by Jeffrey Henning who says, that "school systems are a

city's largest single employer…civil rights activists are less likely to criticize these

underperforming black-run systems."

2.4 Main interests/themes and findings in charter/choice research?

There are many different views of what exactly school choice accomplishes. Most of the

research that has been done has focused on academic achievement of the students both who leave

public schools and enroll in choice schools as well as the public school students who are left

behind. Caroline Hoxby is a very prominent researcher who is certainly pro-school choice.

She contends throughout much of her research that choice plans do exactly what they profess:

"Evidence from these first generation school choice programs has answered simple questions

like whether students' achievement improves when they attend choice schools (apparently, yes,

for the typical student eligible for choice programs now), whether public schools can respond to

competition constructively (apparently, yes), and whether choice schools do cream-skimming

(no, for programs designed as existing choice programs are)" (Hoxby, 2003, pg.63). There is

obviously other research the supports the school choice and charters in particular. Zimmer et.al

write that they could not find throughout their research that charters were "cream skimming" the

best students. They added that they also were not creating "white enclaves" (pg.22).

Academic Achievement

At the time of the printing of his book (2007) Walberg mentions the use of eleven

different studies in order to determine the success academically of vouchers. The sample size is

fairly small but the researchers believe it is sufficient in determining the effectiveness of voucher

programs. Walberg speaks of eight Random-Assignment Studies as well as three Non-Random-Assignment Studies that have been done (Walberg, 2007). According to Walberg all of the studies show some benefit from vouchers compared to those students who lost a lottery to become part of a voucher program. However, while he reports successes academically you can tell in his writings that he is guarded towards the overall large-scale effect of a universal voucher program. One specific example was the work that Paul Peterson, William Howell and Jay Greene did on the Cleveland choice program. These researchers found that voucher students had significant gains in national math tests (Walberg, 2007). According to Green in 2001:

> There have been seven random-assignment and three non-random assignment studies of school choice programs in the last few years. The authors of all ten studies find at least some benefits from the programs and recommend their continuation if not expansion. No study finds significant harm to student achievement form school choice programs. (Walberg, 2007)

Black Student Achievement

Paul Peterson of Harvard University evaluated the programs of Milwaukee, Cleveland, New York and Washington and concluded (regarding Black student achievement):

> According to test score results, African American students from low-income families who switch from a public to a private school do considerably better after two years than students who do not receive a voucher opportunity. However, students from other ethnic backgrounds seem to learn after two years as much but no more in private schools than their public school counterparts (Walberg, 2007, p.55).

Each study found similar results due to the fact that African Americans are the largest group to take advantage of voucher programs and to the fact that they are mainly coming from very poor

learning environments in the first place. Walberg sums up the results this way, "the fact that African American students benefit disproportionately from education vouchers rebuts concerns that school choice would be injurious to minorities" (p.57).

It should not be shocking that the research proves that students who are given the opportunity to leave failing inner city schools and attend private schools have better academic achievement. Many inner city students are African-American therefore it makes sense to see significant gains in their achievement scores, but what happens to the schools and students who have been left behind in those inner city schools? Is it all right to throw them out and chalk them up to statistical proof that voucher programs are successful? Walberg's conclusion that school choice is in no way "injurious" to minorities is completely unfounded. It is true that we see benefits to the few that are able to take advantage of vouchers but there are many other poor and minority students who are left in those under performing schools who are losing funding due to voucher programs.

Differing Data

As was mentioned prior in this section of the paper it depends who you ask and it depends on how the person sets up their study as to what kind of results you get. According to a five-year study by Indiana University, "Students in the Cleveland voucher program performed on the same level as their public school peers" (AP, 2004). This particular study accounted for lower tests score of low income and minority students, because "the voucher group had a greater proportion of White and affluent children" (AP, 2004). The Ohio Department of Education also commissioned a study and found similar results noting that, "After you adjust for minority status, there's no difference" (AP, 2004). The Ohio study went on to say that, "private school students who received scholarships were more likely to be White and affluent" (AP, 2004). The program

does a nice job at awarding scholarships, "but it may not be completely effective in attracting and retaining students from the very low-income, African American families that it originally targeted" (AP, 2004). The Cleveland scholarships are first awarded to the lowest income families but they are then opened up to everyone else. The poor families are not taking advantage of these scholarships at the rate that the program architects imagined.

Why hasn't the Cleveland voucher program or any other voucher program been as successful for minorities and poor? The answer is simple, that the vouchers/scholarships do not cover the full cost of the tuition to the mostly Catholic schools (at least in Cleveland) that these students have the "choice" to attend. Therefore, the ones that are actually taking advantage of the programs are the ones who simply want to go to a parochial school and would like to have it subsidized by the state. Many of these students/families can afford the already high tuition and as the study mentioned many of these students are white. Therefore it makes sense that if a researcher looks at the Cleveland data as a whole the results do look good, because a large portion of the individuals taking advantage of the Cleveland voucher program are White and affluent.

Finally, others have refuted the worth and or the effectiveness of charter or choice schools on different grounds all together. Schneider and Buckley did research on internet search patterns of parents and found simply that, "unfettered introduction of choice can lead to increased segregation, and perhaps even less pressure on schools to improve" (Schneider and Buckley, 2002, pg. 133). Further validating the need to determine if parents are being satisfied and if not then why are they still choosing to leave their neighborhood public school.

2.5 Why Parents choose

As has been mentioned already, many parents choose for many different reasons. Again, this research argues that most parents cannot make "good" choices as it relates to their child's education. Schneider and Buckley say that few parents are willing to make informed choices (2002). Also, a major concern especially around this research is on the ability for poor and non-white parents to choose well. Moe states in his 1995 research that, "parents—especially low-income parents—supposedly care about practical concerns , such as how close the school is or whether it has a good sports team, and put little emphasis on academic quality and other properties of effective schooling (pg.26-27). Schneider and Buckley state that this could "reduce pressure on schools to enhance performance—negating one of the main promises of choice" (2002, pg.134).

Many other authors chime in as to why parents choose. Armor and Peiser found that high academics, curriculum and facilities are listed most often (1998). Schneider and Buckley site in their research that at least five other studies that they looked at list academics or something like it as parents number one reason for choosing (pg.135). May in her 2006 research says that parents are seeking higher standards, small class sizes and a more supportive environment. She also adds that parents are feel that choice is a way in which they can flee underperforming inner-city schools and that charters have a feel being more "exclusive (May, 2006). Kleitz et.al in their work mention three reasons for parental choice to charter schools: hope of better education, smaller class sizes, safety, location of the school and for many parents' friends (Kleitz et. al, 2000). Finally, according to Goldring and Rowley, the reasons for private school choice are academic and curricula emphases, discipline and safety (2006). It should be noticed that throughout all of this research there is certainly a common thread of rationale for parental choice.

After all of the research cited above Schneider and Buckley sum it up best when they say after looking at many different studies for their meta-analysis. They say, "Parents of all races and social classes say they prefer schools that have good teachers and high test scores. And very few admit to being concerned by the racial or class competition of the student body" (pg.136). This again validates the need for this dissertation: if parents are still saying they identify these factors as reason for their choice, then are they satisfied with their choice? Or are they just moving their children because the grass looks greener at the charter school or for extreme dissatisfaction with their current neighborhood school.

2.6 What are Charter Schools?

A charter school is an "independent public school of choice," free from many of the rules and regulations that govern regular public schools (Chester et al, 2000). Specifically, a charter is a "formal or legal … contract between those who launch and run a school and the public body that authorizes [or sponsors] such schools" (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Charter schools are not required to comply with the same policies and procedures concerning curriculum, instructional approaches, teacher staffing and recruitment, work arrangements, and a number of other issues. A charter school is open to all who wish to attend, paid for by tax dollars and/or other independent donations and contributions, and is accountable for its results to an authoritative public body, such as a school board, university, private business firm, church, or a formal parent or neighborhood group. Given their autonomous nature that is different from regular public schools, most charter schools are, in a legal sense, "school districts" in their own right (Wohlsetter et al, 1995).

Charter schools have gained considerable popularity in the last two decades. In 1991, only one state had charter school legislation, and by 2010, 40 states had such legislation

(Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). According to *US Charter Schools*, in 2009 there were 3,500 charter schools with a total enrollment of over one million students (http://www.uscharterschools.org). From a policy perspective, charters are motivated by the effort to introduce competition in public education by providing parents options other than regular public schools. Proponents of school choice view it as a means to limit bureaucratic inefficiency, mediocrity, and lack of accountability and creativity (Friedman, 1982). According to Chubb and Moe, freedom from traditional regulative structures and the market requirement to please parents are key factors that encourage schools of choice to freely determine their educational means and ends, implement innovative practices, and develop new ways to increase performance (Chubb & Moe, 1990). It is argued that this puts competitive pressure on regular schools—particularly those that are failing to meet parental expectations—to actively compete for parents, students, and other resources, rather than enjoy a stable supply of public funds and a steady stream of students and parents (Hill et al, 1997). In such a competitive context, both the failing regular public schools and the unsuccessful charter schools are expected to come under greater risk of closing. Therefore, charter schools are viewed not simply as an option for parents dissatisfied with regular public schools, but as a catalyst to improve standards and performance in the entire public education system.

 According to Elmore (1991) charter schools are an "option-demand" type of choice. Option demand schools coexist with public schools and do not proclaim to attempt to eliminate them but to encourage them to improve (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). According to Schneider and Buckley charter schooling or option demand is a two stage process. "The first stage involves the decision to leave their zoned neighborhood school (a parent or students chooses to choose)" (pg.137). In this dissertation this stage of option demand exists very clearly. The second stage

14

has the parents or students choosing their school "from the set of possible alternatives". For this

dissertation this stage is not as clear. Parents within the sample do not have a vast majority of

choices. They can stay at their public school assignment, apply to charter schools, go to a private

school (costly) or move to outlining districts (costly). The last two options are not really options

because what we will see in the data is that these families are very poor.

Speaking to the idea of option demand, Schneider and Buckley further validate the need

for this dissertation. They say that "some parents will have access to more and better

information about educational alternatives" (pg.137). They also add, "Some parents will be

more capable of making informed choices as a result of greater involvement and participation in

their children's education" (pg. 137). These two points describe the problem with the existing

research. The parents I will be studying fit these two facts perfectly but they do not fit what

researchers see in "option demand" parents. Schneider calls these parents "marginal consumers"

and they are described as being "more highly educated and of higher social status than the

average parent" (Schneider and Buckley, 2002). This description does not accurately describe

the parents in the sample and the ones that are enrolling in the charter schools within this study.

Many charter schools operate in inner-city districts that serve predominantly low-income,

minority families and students (Hening et al, 2003), because average levels of academic

achievement in the regular schools in such districts are often lower than those in more affluent

districts. However, the findings on achievement gains in charter schools have been mixed.

While some studies have found that charter school students outperform their regular school

counterparts (though the differences tend to be modest) (Witte et al, 2007), others have revealed

no significant differences at all (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). Moreover, some studies have found that

regular school students tend to do better than those in charters (Bettinger, 2005). There are also

mixed findings with regard to the extent to which charter schools foster competition and reform among regular public schools. Although some notable policy scholars, such as Caroline M. Hoxby, indicate that regular schools effectively respond to charters by instituting certain curricular and contextual changes (Hoxby, 2003), others provide evidence that such responses are typically limited (Hess et al, 2001), or are at times entirely absent (Zimmer & Buddin, 2009). As a matter of fact, some recent studies suggest that charter schools may undermine the performance and quality of regular public schools (Ni, 2009). Opponents of charters claim that these schools tend to attract the relatively more talented and motivated students, and more efficacious and resourceful parents from the regular public schools, leaving such schools with less economic resources and social capital (Lacireno-Paquet et al, 2009).

As Hess points out, the school choice movement in general, and particularly the charter school initiatives may currently be suffering from a "legacy of overpromising," because the initial "rosy assessments ensured that more realistic appraisals would inevitably disappoint" (Hess, 2010). Yet, charter schools are growing, and are serving more parents and students across the nation every year. Therefore, what is it about these schools that satisfy parents who choose them? A key factor that has received limited attention in the charter school debate is the "voice of the parent." If a growing number of parents are choosing charters over the regular public schools, then which parental expectations are related to satisfaction with charter schools?

2.7 Parental Satisfaction and Expectations from Charter Schools

The early stages in the evolution of new organizational forms are typically characterized by significant variation in structure, quality, and performance (Hannan & Freeman, 1989). This may be a reason for the mixed pattern of findings on charter school outcomes. However, levels of parental satisfaction appear to be uniformly high in charter schools. For example, even when

objective academic outcomes are below expected levels, charter parents tend to rate their schools as more satisfying than regular public schools (Schneider et al, 200). While charter parents tend to have a pro-satisfaction bias toward the choices they make (Buckley & Schneider, 2006), Buckley notes that these parents are also mindful *consumers* of options in the education market, and are therefore likely to evaluate the quality and outcomes of their schools more critically and rigorously than many other parents do (Schneider & Buckley, 2005). But, little is known about the relationship of charter parents' expectations to their levels of overall satisfaction.

A fundamental assumption underlying the charter school movement is that the public good is better served when parents are allowed to operate as interest-maximizing social actors (Chubb & Moe, 1990). This perspective also implies that such actors may have multiple interests, and that these interests may not be equally related to satisfaction with charters. A rational consumer tends to prioritize his/her personal interests when judging the extent of satisfaction with a choice decision (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). Some interests may not be as strongly related to satisfaction; some interests that are important may be put on hold or entirely de-prioritized depending on available options and other conditions (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971). Furthermore, such dynamics are likely to differ by family characteristics. Parents with different social, ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds may not only have different expectations, but their expectations may be related to satisfaction differently (Goldring & Shapira, 1993). For instance, while all parents are likely to value academic success for their children, a family that also values a particular religious or pedagogical orientation or various extracurricular options may be significantly satisfied with a charter school that offers such opportunities even if the school's academic performance is less than ideal (Gill et al, 2001).

Although existing studies of charter schools do not explicitly examine the relationship between parental expectations and satisfaction, they provide significant insights on *what* the relevant set of parental expectations may include. For example, Schneider and Buckley's findings from Washington, DC suggest that a variety of factors affect parents' reasons for choosing charter schools, such as test scores, facilities, staff, location, student characteristics, after school programs, and special education programs (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). Furthermore, the degree of importance associated with different expectations that Washington, DC parents have from charter schools may be different than commonly assumed. In particular, school location and the demographic characteristics of the student body were significantly more important than test scores and basic academic programs. Schneider, Teske, and Marschall's findings from a number of different city school districts also suggest that discipline, location, diversity, and safety were expectations that were just as critical as academic outcomes in choosing charter schools (Schneider et al, 2000). In their study of St. Louis magnet schools (a form of controlled-choice option) (Rossell, 1991), Goldring and Hausman found that parental expectations included academic outcomes as well as convenience, discipline/safety, and school community characteristics (such as cultural beliefs); but, academic expectations were far more important than other factors for magnet parents (Goldring & Hausman, 1999).

In an earlier study of parents from the New York metropolitan area, Schneider et al. found that, racial composition and discipline were key considerations for non-white and low-income families in choosing charters, while affluent parents tended to have all three expectations (Schneider et al, 1998). Similar results were obtained by Kleitz et al.'s statewide study of Texas charter schools, but with an important extension (Kleitz et al, 2000). They found that although academic outcomes were an important expectation regardless of background, low-income

minority parents were more willing to compromise on academic expectations in favor of factors such as safety or school climate when social problems in their residential neighborhoods (e.g., crime and negative peer groups) put children at risk.

More recently, Buckley and Schneider utilized new data from Washington, DC and found that expectations concerning school size, class size, school values, and discipline were central factors that differentiated charter from non-charter parents (Buckley & Schneider, 2006). Except for discipline, these factors also strongly predicted satisfaction differences between charter and non-charter parents. However, the study did not consider the relative strength of each expectation in predicting overall satisfaction level *among* charter parents themselves. For a more complete understanding of the appeal of charter schools to parents, it may be necessary to examine whether different expectations are related to satisfaction in different ways and to different degrees.

Chapter 3
Data and Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The process of gaining approval from each individual school started with an email communication to the director of the UMKC Charter schools, Dr. Jerry Cooper. I also, sent Dr. Cooper a letter by U.S. mail detailing my interest in surveying their schools (Appendix 1). After corresponding with Dr. Cooper through email as well as by phone we scheduled a meeting in which I explained my survey and my research that I hoped to do. During this meeting Dr. Cooper expressed some interest in assisting me in my research and we agreed that we would meet during the summer to set out some future plans. On July 6, 2009 my advisor Dr. Saatcioglu and I met with Dr. Cooper again to gain his endorsement and to further explain the research that I hoped to do. During this meeting he explained to us that it would up to the individual principals to give their endorsement but he would put me in front of them at one of their upcoming meetings in order to explain my research. On September 2, 2009 I had the privilege of presenting my research to the UMKC sponsored charter school principals. During that presentation I reviewed my research and asked for the endorsement and assistance with my survey. By the time I finished my presentation all of the principals had agreed to participate and felt like my research could be of benefit to them, their schools and their families.

During the months of September – December of 2009 I secured written endorsements from the charter school principals using a template that I have provided them (Appendix 2). The principals surveyed their families and I collected them throughout this time span.

3.2 What does the survey look like?

The survey was developed in conjunction with my advisor Dr. Argun Saatcioglu and can be found in Appendix 3. The survey consists of four parts: school experience and reasons for choosing your school, suggestions for improvement, parental participation and demographic data.   Not all of the questions within the survey will be used during this dissertation. Some of the questions on exit, voice, loyalty and neglect will simply be present in the data set and will be available for future research possibilities.

3.3 What schools will be studied?

This study will focus and be centered on data that will be collected from the UMKC Sponsored Charter Schools. These schools listed in the table below exist within the KCMO school district. This school district is one that has seen its fair share of hard times: academically, socially and publicly. It is a district that has been plagued by white flight and because of that it has been left with a challenging student population and a school board and central office administration that is at the very least disjointed and left with no stability. The district has tried many different initiatives in order to increase student performance and to in general improve the overall effectiveness of the district. They have tried charter schools, magnet schools, Montessori schools and specific academies just to name a few.

This study will go deep into the University of Missouri Kansas City sponsored charter schools. Many of these schools are oversubscribed (meaning that they have more applications than they have spots to fill). By regulations charter schools must select their students randomly. This is to ensure that there is not any cream-skimming of students. However, this is counter-

intuitive to one of the premises of the charter movement. By nature charters should be able to

cater to the needs of the students and families that they enroll. Not allowing the charters to pick

the students that would best be suited to their "charter" defeats the purpose all together. The

argument against this would be that parents would need to inform themselves of what each

charter school offers and then only apply to the ones that meet the learning needs and the "taste"

(as Tiebout would put it) of the parents and student. To that point my research would argue that

parents do not and cannot make themselves "informed consumers".

UMKC Sponsored Charter School	Grade Levels	Enrollment	Surveys Collected	Percentage of Responses from School
Allen Village School	K-8	426	141	33%
Brookside Charter School	K-5	308	34	11%
Brookside Frontier Math & Science School	6-10	110	10	9%
Frontier School of Innovation	K-5	200	61	30%
Genesis School, Inc.	5-9	136	17	13%
Tolbert Preparatory Academy	9-10	402	4	1%
Pathway Academy	K-8	300	123	41%
Totals:		**1882**	**390**	**21%**

3.4 Empirical Context and Data

Again, this study examines the relationship of parental expectations and satisfaction with

charter schools based on a survey of parents with children at charter schools in a large

Midwestern city school district. As a general review of the basic characteristics of the survey

data: The schools in the survey are sponsored by a local public university that sets specific

curricular and performance standards, although each school is operated by a different group.

These groups include philanthropic organizations, foundations, business establishments, civil service agencies, and religious organizations. While, the schools are subject to a common set of curricular and performance standards, they also have notable autonomy to emphasize particular themes, such as commerce, science, technology, and religion.

The data was collected in the fall of 2009. The collection process involved three steps. First, the sponsoring university informed all the charters in the sampling frame that it endorsed the survey in this study, on the condition that the schools would remain anonymous. Then, the principal at each school was asked if they would officially agree to allow access to parents in their school. Seven out of 10 principals agreed. Finally, the survey was administered to parents at each of the participating schools, during parent-school night. Out of a total 1,082 parents across the seven schools, 396 responded. Six surveys were deemed unusable, leaving 390 for the analysis (a total response rate of 36 percent). Two of the participating schools served kindergarten through fifth graders; two served K-8 graders; the remaining three served 6-10 graders. The average enrollment across the schools was 155 students (with a standard deviation of 124). The survey instrument briefly described the purpose of the study and stated that responses would remain anonymous and confidential. For parents with more than one child in the charter schools, the survey asked for responses regarding the oldest child.

Several important issues were addressed by the survey. The demographic characteristics included student gender (1=male; 0=female), parent race/ethnicity (white, African-American, Hispanic, and other), income (1=less than 10,000; 2=10,000-20,000; 3=$20,001-$30,000; … ; 6=over 50,000), mother's education level (1=graduate degree; 2=four-year college; 3=associate degree; 4=high school; 5=GED or other degree), and family structure (0=no-parent; 1=single-parent; 2=double-parent). The survey also asked about whether the student was new to the

23

school (1=new; 0=returning) and the total number of years the student has been enrolled at his/her charter school. These were important factors to account for in examining the relationship between parental expectations and satisfaction, since length of time at a given school may mediate perceptions of expectations and satisfaction. Another factor important to control for in the same regard was the *charter-proneness* of the family, or the willingness and/or ability of the parents to pursue charter schools regardless of the range of charter school options in the district. This was measured by asking the likelihood of the family to move out of the city if there were no charters (1=strongly prefer to stay; … ; 3=perhaps move; … ; 5=strongly prefer to move). The basic descriptives for the responses are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

As seen in the table, the sample was nearly 54 percent black, with an average income (2.612) between 20,000 and 30,000 dollars. A mean of 1.349 for family structure suggests that a considerable proportion of students were in non-traditional families. Specifically, 54 percent were in single-parent households, and five percent had no parents at home (for these students a non-parent guardian responded to the survey). The average mother's education level was 2.887, which closely approximates an associate degree (3=associate degree, on the measurement scale). Forty six percent of the students were male. Sixty percent were new at their schools, and the average student had been enrolled at his/her school for 2.181 years. The average parent indicated that he/she would be moderately likely to move out of the city if there were no charter schools (3.477).   The sizes of the standard deviations shown in Table 1, relative to the means, suggest that there is considerable variation in basic sample characteristics.

24

Most importantly, the survey addressed parental expectations from the charter schools, and the degree of satisfaction. Satisfaction was measured by asking: "Overall, how satisfied are you with the way your school is doing its job at the moment?" (1=very dissatisfied; 2=satisfied; 3=very satisfied). A total of 16 different expectations were addressed in terms of importance (1=not important at all; … ;3=somewhat important; … ; 5=very important). These included: parental involvement, teacher quality, peer quality, curricular benefits, extracurricular opportunities, location, reputation, success of graduates, safety, social atmosphere, facilities, extra amenities, innovativeness, school culture, athletic activities, and non-athletic activities.

The data on these questions along with the information on key student and parental characteristics support the statistical analysis in this study. The survey also included brief responses (one-two sentences) to an open-ended question on the most important improvements that the parents liked to see at their schools. Significant patterns in responses to this question provide further insights on expectations and satisfaction from the charter schools in the study.

3.5 Analysis Strategy

The analysis included several parts. First, the responses to the 16 specific parental expectation questions were factor-analyzed to determine a more limited number of fundamental, underlying dimensions. Next, a series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to examine unadjusted mean differences in fundamental expectation dimensions and satisfaction levels across categories of race/ethnicity, income, family structure, and mother's education level. The results of these tests illustrate not only the average patterns of expectations and satisfaction for the entire sample, but whether there are differences in these patterns by family background characteristics. Broadly, this approach is consistent with analytic approaches in the existing studies of parental expectations from charter schools discussed earlier.

In light of the central objectives of this study, the third part of the analysis involved hierarchical linear regression modeling that examined the effects of expectation dimensions on overall parental satisfaction, controlling for a number of covariates. By accounting for the nesting of parents (and students) within the schools, the hierarchical approach not only reduces prediction biases in coefficient estimates and standard errors, but also partitions the variance components at different levels (DiPrete & Forristal, 1999). The full model, fitted in stepwise fashion, is shown below:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha_j + \sum \beta_p E_{pij} + \sum \gamma_q F_{qij} + \sum \delta_k C_{kij} + \sum \lambda_m (E*R)_{mij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{1.1}$$
$$\alpha_j = \theta + \upsilon_j \tag{1.2}$$

where i=student ID, j=school ID. Y is the satisfaction measure. E is a vector of expectation dimensions. F includes race/ethnicity, income, mother's education, family structure, and student gender. C is a vector of three additional covariates including whether the student was new to his/her school, the number of years the student has been enrolled at the school, and the *charter-proneness* of the family (the subjective likelihood of the family to move out of the city if there were no charters). $E*R$ is the interaction of the expectation vector with a vector for race/ethnicity. It is included to test the ways in which different expectations may predict satisfaction based on family race/ethnicity. A number of other interactions with parental expectations were also tested, using income, education level, and family structure. However, none of these interaction terms were statistically significant when the race/ethnicity interactions with expectations were specified. Also, including those omitted interactions resulted in only negligible changes in the estimates of the coefficients shown in equations 1.1 and 1.2 above.[1]

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[1] The results of these extended models are available from the author.

Level 2 in the model allows the intercept at level 1 to vary randomly across the schools. Thus, θ represents the adjusted grand average for satisfaction, and υ_j is the school-level random disturbance, which helps adjust all estimates for potential violations of the independent observations assumption due to nesting in schools. Finally, ε_{ij} is the within-school random error term.

The last part of the analysis involved the thematic coding of the brief responses to the open-ended question on improvements parents liked to see at their schools. The responses were classified by two different coders who identified comments that appeared to address similar issues. The inter-coder agreement was nearly 90 percent. After resolving the initial differences between the coders, a final set of themes was specified by the two coders in common.[2] The prevalence of each theme was then broken out by parental satisfaction level and race/ethnicity. It should be noted that, given the open-ended nature of the question on "needed improvements," the responses resulted in a pool of rich and multifaceted information that in many ways went above and beyond the issues of expectations and satisfaction. Therefore, this information was used in a limited fashion, only ways that were instrumental in examining the expectation-satisfaction relationship, the central topic of this study. As will be shown below, parts of the thematic data were particularly useful in interpretations of results from the hierarchical regression model.

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[2] *For more on this thematization approach, see,* RICHARD E. BOYATZIS, TRANSFORMING QUALITATIVE INFORMATION: THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND CODE DEVELOPMENT (Sage Publications 1998).

4.1 What Are the Fundamental Patterns of Expectation from Charter Schools?

Given the different expectation items that parents in the study were asked to evaluate in terms of importance, the initial step in the analysis was to factor-analyze these responses and determine the underlying, fundamental dimensions of expectations. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)—a standard method for data reduction—was implemented for this purpose. As shown in Table 2, EFA revealed that a pattern of loadings that reflected three latent factors, related to academic, school context, and extracurricular issues. Three of the original 15 survey items on expectations were dropped due to unacceptable low loadings (facilities, location, and reputation). The reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) score for the pool of items associated with each factor is also shown in Table 2. All three reliability scores are well above 0.900, indicating a high level of internal consistency for the factors.

Insert Table 2 about here

Academic expectations include emphases on opportunities for parental participation in the schools, teacher quality and effectiveness, stronger and challenging curricula, and success for students after high school (such as post-secondary institutions). Interestingly, safety concerns are also an important part of academic expectations. This may be due to the perception that a safe environment is crucial for effective and focused learning in the schools. Charter parents in this study may feel this way particularly if their children had been enrolled in regular public schools that were unsafe and disorderly prior to starting in their charter schools, at least from the

parents' standpoint. The expectations related to school context involve positive and productive peer groups, nurturing and supportive social atmosphere, effective facilities (both instructional and non-instructional), and collaborative and innovative school culture. Finally, extracurricular expectations of parents include team-oriented athletic activities, such as a football or basketball team, and non-athletic interest groups, such as a debate team or choir.

As seen in Table 3, the three fundamental expectations factors (each one specified as the mean of the pool of survey items constituting that factor) are only moderately correlated to each other, indicating a reasonable degree of discriminant validity. In other words, the factors appear to represent interrelated, yet sufficiently distinct issues for parents. Table 3 also reports the correlation of the expectation factors with overall satisfaction. Although these correlations offer a preliminary insight on the size and strength of the relationship between expectations and satisfaction, they are bivariate estimates unadjusted for the effects of relevant covariates. Nonetheless, academic expectations appear to have the strongest bivariate association with satisfaction (0.235, p<0.010), followed by school context expectations (0.175. p<0.010), which is followed by extracurricular expectations (0.060, p>.100).

Inset Table 3 about here

Returning to Table 2, the mean value of each expectation factor indicates the importance of that expectation for the parents. For example, the mean of academic expectations is highest (4.719, where 5 =very important). However, expectations in regards to school context (4.270) and extracurricular activities (4.209) are also notably high. Therefore, all three expectations appear to be important. This finding is broadly consistent with those from past studies, which

29

suggest that effective academic performance may not be the only expectation that charter parents have from their schools; there are a host of other expectations that are also important (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). Moreover, as seen in Table 2, the average parent is also considerably satisfied with the way his/her school is doing its job (2.283, where 3=very satisfied). In sum, the average parent not only has high expectation, but is pleased with the way his/her school operates.

4.2 Do Expectations from Charter Schools Vary by Parental Background?

Table 4 reports the variation in these patterns by parental race/ethnicity, income, education, and family structure. Considering race/ethnicity, the mean satisfaction levels are equally high for each group, well above two. The observed differences are not large enough to be statistically significant (F=1.890, p>0.100). The same is true for income, mother's education, and family structure. These findings simply suggest that charter parents are equally and highly satisfied irrespective of social background. Likewise, mean differences in expectations do not appear to vary significantly by race/ethnicity or basic SES characteristics. The majority of the means are well above four. There are two notable exceptions to this pattern, both concerning extracurricular expectations. First, such expectations appear to be more important for Hispanic parents (4.580) than for white, black and other parents (F=7.410, p<0.010), and less important for higher income than for lower income parents (F=7.300, p<0.010). But, the sizes of the differences are not large relative to the measurement scale.

Insert Table 4 about here

Despite these two exceptions, the findings that there is limited variation in expectation patterns by parental background differs from insights offered by existing research regarding expectations by race/ethnicity and SES. As discussed earlier, there is evidence that charter school expectations may be different for white and non-white and for low- and high-income parents (Schneider et al, 1998). The lack of considerable differences among parents in this study makes it particularly important to conduct more robust tests to examine if certain expectations are more strongly related to satisfaction, and whether such relationships vary by parental background.

4.3 Are Specific Expectations More Strongly Related to Satisfaction than others? Does this Vary by Parental Background?

Table 5 shows the results of hierarchical linear regression models (HLMs) that test the relationship of different expectations to satisfaction in a multivariate framework. The structural form of the full model is specified in equations 1.1 and 1.2. The analysis starts out with a null model, Model 1, with no predictors. This model is useful for two purposes. First, it predicts the satisfaction level for the average parent (2.326, p<0.010), which, although similar to the mean level of satisfaction reported in Table 2 (2.282), is adjusted for the nesting of parents in schools. In other words, it is corrected for the potential biases originating from the fact that parent responses are not independent due to groups of parents belonging to the same schools. The same correction applies to all estimates in the subsequent models in Table 4 as well.

Insert Table 5 about here

31

The second purpose of Model 1 is to estimate the relevant variance components, particularly the extent which variation in satisfaction is explained by between-school differences as opposed to within-school differences. This is estimated by the intraclass correlation coefficient (p) for model 1, which is the proportion of the between-school variance parameter (0.032, p<0.050) to the sum of the between- and within-school variance parameters (0.032+0.390).[3] The result indicates that school-level differences account for nearly eight percent (0.075) of the variance in charter parents' satisfaction. While small, this finding suggests that the HLM approach results in more consistent estimates than a standard linear model, such as ordinary least squares (OLS). Also, the variance parameters for Model 1 constitute baseline estimates to compare variance parameters in subsequent models.

Model 2 introduces the three expectation measures (*E* in equation 1.1), which account for over six percent of variance, due largely to reductions in the within-school variance component. Academic expectations appear to have the strongest effect on satisfaction (0.316, p<0.010). Expectations regarding school context and extracurricular activities do not result in any change in overall satisfaction when the effect of academic expectations is taken into account. This finding pertains to the fundamental research questions of which parental expectation is more important in terms of predicting satisfaction with charter schools. The average parent appears to be more satisfied with his/her school if he/she has high academic expectations, although as seen in Table 2, all three expectations are regarded as highly and equally important by the average parent in the sample. In other words, despite multiple expectations from the schools, academic concerns seem to be the predominant factor for parents in judging satisfaction with school.

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[3] Level 1 and level 2 variance components represent the variation in school- and individual-level random error terms, which are denoted by ε_{ij} and υ_j in equations 1.1 and 1.2 respectively.

Parental background characteristics and other covariates (F and C in equation 1.1) are introduced in Model 3. Being white is the reference category for race/ethnicity effects. The effect of being black (as opposed to white) is significant only at $p<0.100$ level. Other race/ethnicity contrasts result in even greater p values. Basic SS characteristics (income, education, and family structure) do not appear to have significant effects either. Neither do other control measures, such as being new at the school, the length of time at the school, and propensity to more from the district of there were no charter schools. Nevertheless, the set of predictors introduced in Model 3 altogether explain nearly and additional six percent of variance compared to the previous model. Most importantly, they result in a considerable reduction in the size of the effect for academic expectations (0.260, $p<0.100$). They also result in modest changes in the effects of school context and extracurricular expectations. Therefore, the added predictors are likely to moderate the effect of expectations on satisfaction. The full model (Model 4) explicitly tests this possibility.

In Model 4, the interactions of each expectation with the race/ethnicity indicators are introduced ($E*R$ in equation 1.1). This model addresses the question of whether the expectation-satisfaction relationship varies by parent characteristics.[4] Model 4 not only results in an additional 11 percent variance explained, but reveals important insights on the different effects of expectations by race/ethnicity. Since white parents are the reference group for race/ethnicity contrasts, the main effects of academic, school context, and extracurricular expectations pertain to whites. For these parents, who comprise nearly 15 percent of the sample, academic expectations tend to have the strongest effect on satisfaction (0.744, $p<0.050$). Basically, an increase in academic expectations for white parents is associated with a notable increase in

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[4] As noted in the methods section, other interactions with parental expectations were also tested, using income, education level, and family structure. None of these interactions were statistically significant and omitting them resulted in only negligible changes in the coefficient estimates reported in Table 5.

satisfaction. By the same token, these parents are less satisfied if they have lower academic expectations. The effect of academic expectations is also important for parents in the "other" race/ethnicity category (largely Asian, and comprising about nine percent of the entire sample), but this particular effect is in the opposite direction (-1.112, p<0.010), resulting in a net difference of -0.368 from whites (0.744-1.112). This means that these parents are less satisfied with their schools when they have higher academic expectations. School context and extracurricular expectations are far less relevant in predicting satisfaction for white parents and for parents in the "other" race/ethnicity category.

The situation is different for black and Hispanic parents, comprising about 54 percent and 22 percent of the sample respectively. In particular, expectations around school context matter more for black parents compared to whites in determining satisfaction—a positive difference of 0.581 (p<0.050). Comparing Hispanic parents to whites, extracurricular expectations appear to matter more for Hispanics in predicting satisfaction (0.300, p<0.010). Therefore, it appears that increases in school context expectations for blacks and in extracurricular expectations for Hispanics result in greater satisfaction; and, decreases in these areas lead to lower levels of satisfaction.

The estimated effects of different expectations by race/ethnicity should be considered in conjunction with the mean levels of expectations reported by race/ethnicity in Table 4. Specifically, a positive or negative effect of an expectation on satisfaction for a given group in Table 5 does *not* mean that the group expects less or more in other areas. For example, the significant academic expectation effect on satisfaction for white and "other" race/ethnicity parents suggest that academic issues are simply *the predominant factor in judging satisfaction with the schools*, even though other expectations may also be high, as shown in Table 4.

34

Similarly, significant school context effects for blacks and extracurricular effects for Hispanics do *not* imply that these groups expect less from their charter schools in other areas.

Furthermore, the statistically significant "positive" effects in Table 5 should be interpreted with caution. Considering the negative effects first may help explain the issue. Negative effects are relatively straightforward to interpret, as they denote inverse relationships with satisfaction, such as the effect of academic expectations for parents in the "other" race/ethnicity category (-1.112, $p<0.050$). This effect suggests that when such parents expect more from their charter schools in terms of academic performance, they tend to be less satisfied. Therefore, greater academic effort from their schools may be necessary for a better evaluation from these parents, even though they are just as highly satisfied as other groups (see Table 4).

By contrast, positive effects in Table 5 are more complex to interpret. For instance, the effect of academic expectations for white parents (0.744, $p<0.010$) suggests that charter schools may appeal to white parents primarily in terms of academic returns. But, the estimated effect applies to white parents with lower academic expectations as well, since a decrease in academic expectations results in lower satisfaction. What does this mean? Or, more precisely, what would a charter school need to do in order to improve the satisfaction level of a white parent with below average academic expectations from the school? A similar question can be raised with regard to black parents with below average social context expectations, and Hispanic parents with below average extracurricular expectations—since both the "Context x Black" and "Extracurricular x Hispanic" effects are significant and positive (0.581 and 0.300 respectively) in Table 5. What, in other words, should a charter school do to better satisfy a black parent with lower social context concerns, or a Hispanic parent with a lower extracurricular concerns?

Such questions present a challenge because average expectation levels are uniformly high for all parent groups. Moreover, further empirical examination of such questions may require extended regression models that include three-way and four-way interaction terms, involving not just the combinations of different expectations measures, but the interaction of those combinations with race/ethnicity indicators. Such models are infeasible in this study given the modest sample size, and the limited proportion of particular race/ethnicity group in the data, such as Hispanic parents and parents in the "other" race/ethnicity category. However, relevant clues are offered by parents' responses to the open-ended survey question on the most important improvements they liked to see at their schools. Table 6 shows the basic themes of "needed improvements" comments from white parents with below average academic expectations (about 18 percent of all white parents), form black parents with below average social context expectations (about 24 percent of all black parents), and from Hispanic parents with below average extracurricular expectations (about 19 percent of all Hispanic parents).

Insert Table 6 about here

White parents in the table emphasize the need for improvements in facilities and after-school activities. Related comments typically refer to issues such as lunch quality, cafeteria location, and sports and arts activities. Black parents mention the need for better athletic programs and opportunities for more effective parent-teacher relationships. They not only identify specific team sports, but specify alternative ways to improve parental participation in the schools. Finally, Hispanic parents tend to emphasize the need for better discipline and safety. They point out particular problems in regards to social order in schools and suggest specific

36

ways to improve security, such as locks and security checks. Naturally, the comments

summarized in Table 6 belong to a limited subset of parents in the reported categories. Still,

these themes shed some light on what the schools may have to do in order to improve

satisfaction levels of those particular subgroups. In other words, while the satisfaction levels of

white, black, and Hispanic parents tend to be related to different types of expectations, there are

subgroups within each category who, in judging satisfaction level, may consider expectations

different from the predominant pattern of expectations that apply to the rest of the parents in the

category.

Chapter V.

DICUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examines parental expectations and satisfaction from charter schools. It addresses what parents expect from these schools and how different types of expectations are related to overall satisfaction. The issue of expectations has received limited attention in research on charter schools, because the majority of studies have focused on charter students' academic gains compared to students' performance levels at regular public schools. Even less attention is paid to the relationship of different parental expectations with satisfaction. This gap is important to address for developing a better understanding of how charter schools attract parents, how they respond to their expectations, and most importantly, which expectations are more important in determining satisfaction levels. Although academic success may be important for many parents, evidence on academic returns from charters is mixed, indicating that the performance of charter school students is not notably superior to and may at times be even lower than that of students in regular schools. Even so, findings from existing research suggest that charter parents tend to be highly and uniformly satisfied with their schools. Therefore, are there expectations besides strong academics that are important in determining parental satisfaction? Furthermore, since parents with different backgrounds may have different expectations from charter schools, does the expectation-satisfaction relationship vary by parental characteristics?

The analysis in this study addresses these questions by drawing on a survey of parents from seven university-sponsored charter schools in a large Midwestern city school district. The findings reveal three broad dimensions or categories of expectations: academic (e.g., teacher quality, curriculum), school context (e.g., peers, school culture), and extracurricular (e.g., athletic and non-athletic activities). The average parent in the sample not only has high levels of

expectations in all three areas, but is also highly satisfied with his/her school. This pattern does not change by race/ethnicity or SES. However, multivariate regression results indicate that the relationship of different expectations to overall satisfaction tends to vary by race/ethnicity. It appears that academic expectations have the strongest effect on satisfaction for white parents and parents in the "other" race/ethnicity category (largely Asian). Expectations regarding school context strongly affect the satisfaction of black parents. Finally, extracurricular expectations determine the satisfaction of Hispanic parents.

These findings have important implications. First, while multiple expectations appear to be equally important for all parents, parents from different race/ethnicity backgrounds seem to consider certain expectations more central in judging satisfaction. This process may or may not be deliberate on the part of parents. The data in this study does not permit a systematic test of whether different groups of parents consciously refer to specific expectations over others in judging satisfaction with charter schools, but the findings provide important clues on the predominant factors that are tied to judgments of satisfaction for different groups of parents. From a policy perspective, this finding does not only benefit charter schools in terms of measures to take in order to attract and maintain parents, but also contributes to debates on ways in which regular schools can compete with charters for parents and students.

For instance, taken at face value, the finding that school context and extracurricular expectations are important for black and Hispanic parents (respectively) in judging satisfaction with charter schools suggest that regular schools may appeal to such parents by doing more in terms of meeting those specific expectations. This may be a useful short term competitive strategy for regular schools to attract nonwhite parents, particularly for regular schools that struggle academically, since meaningful academic improvements, as critical as they are, typically

39

require considerable time, effort, and resources to accomplish in failing city school systems (Payne, 2008). There is, however, a potential downside to such a strategy, because it may undermine regular school's effort to appeal to other parents, such as whites, who appear to view academic issues as more pressing when judging satisfaction with charter schools. Ultimately, the findings of this study suggest that, regardless of race/ethnicity, charter parents *do* have high expectations in multiple areas. Therefore, long term strategies for competition, on the part of both charter and non-charter schools, may be more effective if they addressed academic, context, and extracurricular issues relatively equally.

This study also raises a critical conceptual question for future research: Why do race/ethnicity differences exist with regard to the expectation-satisfaction relationship? While the data for the study falls short of examining this question, the findings set the grounds for a number of possible explanations. One reason for variation by race/ethnicity may be that, prior to enrollment in charter schools, parents with different backgrounds had their children enrolled in public schools with different deficiencies. For example, before coming to charter schools, many Hispanic students may have been enrolled in schools with particularly limited extracurricular activities. Likewise, a large proportion of black students may have been enrolled in public schools with contextual problems, such as a negative peer effects and a disruptive culture, at least from the parents' standpoint. Therefore, these parents may be particularly sensitive about non-academic expectations when judging satisfaction with charter schools, although they do have academic expectations just as high as any other group (see Table 4). Alternatively, in judging satisfaction, contextual expectations for black parents and extracurricular expectations for Hispanics may be issues that are inherently more important than other issues.

Furthermore, differences in the expectation-satisfaction relationship by race/ethnicity may be affected by the broader forces of racial/ethnic stratification. For instance, although black and Hispanic parents have high academic expectations, they may feel that schools in general—even charter schools—may be less responsive to such demands from their demographic group. They may therefore often rely on other criteria in judging satisfaction. Also, since these parents may reside in unstable, high poverty urban neighborhoods that put children at risk, they may feel that non-academic expectations are "crucial" in judging school effectiveness, regardless of the degree of academic expectations (Kleitz et al, 2000). This may apply to black parents in this study more than Hispanics, since school context expectations are particularly influential on black's satisfaction levels. Hispanics, on the other hand, may feel that upward mobility for their children may be more likely through nonacademic than academic routes, and they may thus evaluate their satisfaction with charter schools in reference to extracurricular expectations, such as opportunities for sports, dance, and other related activities.

Exploring these issues further would help understand how choice-making processes work for different groups of parents in the school choice context. This in turn would help understand the social structural bases of satisfaction criteria, and to consider the extent to which policy formulation in public education takes—and whether it *should* take—such bases into account.

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TABLE 1

	Percentage	Mean	Std. Dev.
Race/Ethnicity			
White	14.870		
Black	53.590		
Hispanic	22.050		
Other	9.490		
Income		2.612	1.594
Mother's Education Level		2.886	1.280
Family Structure		1.349	0.580
Student Gender (Male)		0.464	0.499
New at This School		0.600	0.490
Number of Years at This School		2.181	2.279
Would Move If No Charters		3.477	1.534

TABLE 1: Race/ethnicity proportions and basic descriptives for survey respondents (n=390).

TABLE 2

	Factor Loading	Reliability	Mean	Std. Dev.
Expectations				
Academic		0.966	4.719	0.484
Parental Involvement	0.541			
Teacher Quality	0.766			
Curricular Benefits	0.667			
Success of Graduates	0.529			
Safety	0.740			
School Context		0.920	4.270	0.704
Peers	0.395			
Social Atmosphere	0.491			
Extra Amenities	0.685			
Innovativeness	0.896			
School Culture	0.624			
Extracurricular		0.954	4.209	0.854
Non-Athletic Activities	0.645			
Athletic Activities	0.857			
Overall Satisfaction			2.283	0.654
Goodness of Fit for Factor Solution (χ^2)	99.716 ***			

TABLE 2: Measurement properties for parental expectation factors, and basic descriptives for expectation composites and the satisfaction measure. Factor loadings are based on the rotated pattern matrix from exploratory factor analysis. Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation was used for determining final factor structure. All cross-loadings (not shown here) were below 0.200. Reliability scores are based on Cronbach's Alpha. The mean for each expectation factor is the average of scores for the survey items associated with that factor.

TABLE 3

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Overall Satisfaction	1.000			
(2) Academic Expectations	0.235 ***	1.000		
(3) School Context Expectations	0.175 ***	0.490 ***	1.000	
(4) Extracurricular Expectations	0.060	0.428 ***	0.569 ***	1.000

TABLE 3: Pearson product moment correlation coefficients for parental satisfaction and expectation measures.
*** $p < 0.010$.

TABLE 4

	Satisfaction	Expectations		
		Academic	School Context	Extracurricular
Race/Ethnicity				
White	2.346	4.561	4.279	3.989
Black	2.223	4.755	4.215	4.170
Hispanic	2.414	4.729	4.461	4.580
Other	2.243	4.708	4.170	3.942
F Value	1.890	2.050	2.400 *	7.410 ***
Income				
Less than $10,000	2.292	4.751	4.386	4.504
$10,001 - $20,000	2.287	4.676	4.230	4.164
$20,001 - $30,000	2.275	4.788	4.309	4.269
$30,001 - $40,000	2.263	4.710	4.264	4.040
$40,001 - $50, 000	2.300	4.730	4.100	3.650
More than $50,000	2.466	4.635	4.178	3.672
F Value	0.450	0.630	0.990	7.300 ***
Mother's Education Level				
GED or other degree	2.279	4.735	4.419	4.595
High School Diploma	2.264	4.812	4.417	4.333
Associate's Degree	2.370	4.736	4.277	4.193
Bachelor's Degree	2.162	4.638	4.018	3.657
Graduate Degree	2.298	4.751	4.323	4.245
F Value	0.790	0.640	2.080 *	1.230
Family Structure				
No Parents	2.235	4.525	4.188	4.382
Single Parent	2.263	4.745	4.269	4.233
Double Parent	2.347	4.741	4.303	4.172
F Value	1.260	1.700	0.250	0.530

TABLE 4: Results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests for mean comparisons of satisfaction and satisfaction measures across race/ethnicity categories, income categories, education levels, and family structure categories.
*** p<0.010; * p<0.100.

TABLE 5

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Importance of Expectations								
Academic			0.316 ***	(0.087)	0.260 *	(0.142)	0.744 **	(0.338)
School Context			0.066	(0.062)	0.089	(0.084)	0.109	(0.250)
Extracurricular			-0.041	(0.050)	-0.062	(0.061)	-0.224	(0.167)
Race/Ethnicity								
Black					-0.236 *	(0.134)	1.159	(1.351)
Hispanic					-0.091	(0.168)	3.047	(1.908)
Other					-0.293	(0.171)	2.882	(2.110)
Income					-0.031	(0.029)	-0.023	(0.029)
Mother's Education Level					-0.036	(0.035)	-0.037	(0.034)
Family Structure					-0.046	(0.087)	-0.069	(0.087)
Student Gender (Male)					-0.013	(0.087)	0.006	(0.086)
New at This School					0.003	(0.116)	0.006	(0.116)
Number of Years at This School					0.013	(0.023)	0.010	(0.023)
Would Move If No Charters					-0.013	(0.030)	-0.030	(0.029)
Interaction Effects								
Academic x Black							-0.402	(0.374)
Academic x Hispanic							-0.590	(0.459)
Academic x Other							-1.112 **	(0.499)
Context x Black							0.581 **	(0.274)
Context x Hispanic							-0.393	(0.336)
Context x Other							0.338	(0.331)
Extracurricular x Black							0.196	(0.181)
Extracurricular x Hispanic							0.300 ***	(0.100)
Extracurricular x Other							0.174	(0.212)
Intercept	2.326 ***	(0.077)	0.724 **	(0.365)	1.485 **	(0.637)	-0.146	(1.232)
Variance Components								
School (between schools)	0.032 **		0.029 **		0.026 **		0.025 **	
Individual (within school)	0.390 ***		0.366 ***		0.347 ***		0.306 ***	
Total	0.422		0.395		0.373		0.331	
Variance Explained								
Compared to previous model			0.064		0.056		0.113	
Compared to Model 1					0.116		0.216	
Intraclass Correlation (ρ)	0.075		0.073		0.070		0.076	
Wald Chi-square	.		20.650 ***		24.770 **		57.500 **	

TABLE 5: Results of hierarchical linear regression models predicting the effects of parental expectations on overall satisfaction from charter schools. Variance explained by each model is determined by the proportion of the total variance for that model to the total variance for the preceding model ("Compared to previous model") and to the total variance for the null model ("Compared to Model 1") separately.
*** $p<0.010$; ** $p<0.050$; * $p<0.100$.

TABLE 6

White parents with below average academic expectations [18 percent of all white parents]	Black parents with below average social context expectations [24 percent of all black parents]	Hispanic parents with below average extracurricular expectations [19 percent of all Hispanic parents]
Improvements in Facilities "Better lunches."	**After-School Athletics** "Offer possibly more sport teams, basketball or foortball."	**Discipline** "Issue warnings to students."
"A separate gym and cafeteria."	"Having an athletic sport like basketball team for school."	"They need to take care of the kids because they are kids they think they are adults."
"Lockers in all classrooms. My oldest daughter's classroom does not have lockers for the students."	"Sport team (maybe track or basketball for boys and girls)."	"The teachers are intimidated of the students."
After-School Activities "Rummage sale to raise money for after-school activities."	**Better Parent-Teacher Relationship** "More direct and easier access to student's teacher for informartion, cuts down on slight misunderstandings."	**Security Concerns** "Front door is always unlocked."
"More art and music activities after school."	"More parent/teacher after-school meetings."	"We need more security for the entrance of school as anyone can just walk in and kidnap or do school bomb threats.
"After school sports (i.e. basketball, baseball, soccer, etc.)"	"Tell the parents if the child is not turning in the work."	"I would like more security."

TABLE 6: Recurrent themes with sample comments on needed improvements in the charter schools provided by white parents with below average academic expectations, black parents with below average social context expectations, and Hispanic parents with below average extracurricular expectations.

51

April 22, 2009

Dr. Jerry Cooper
Director of Charter Schools
UMKC Charter School Center
5306 Holmes Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Greetings Dr. Cooper:

I am a Doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas. My research is on school choice and I am writing to you in the hopes that you would be willing to assist me in my quest for data for my study. In particular, I am interested in UMKC-affiliated charter schools in the KC metro area. Broadly speaking, I would like to examine reasons why charter school students choose their particular school. Are choices made on the basis of academics, social, instructional, or other reasons? How do the quality and the reputation of choice schools affect the process? Similarly, to what extent does the quality and performance of regular public schools play a role?

To this end, I would like to survey a representative sample of UMKC charter school students and find out their reasons for charter school enrollment. Also, I would like to have the opportunity to meet and discuss with you possibilities for UMKC to assist my research. Can we schedule a time in the near future to do that?

You can contact me through my email, mikeshoe@hotmail.com or by phone at 913.209.9693. You can also contact my advisor at KU, Dr. Argun Saatcioglu, at argun@ku.edu or at 785.864.1826.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Michael Schumacher
Assistant Principal
Bishop Miege High School

September 24, 2009

Michael Schumacher
Bishop Miege High School
5041 Reinhardt Drive
Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66205

To Whom It May Concern:

After meeting with Mr. Michael Schumacher and conferring with Dr. Jerry Cooper, Director of UMKC Charter schools as well as Dr. Steve McClure, Assistant Director of UMKC Charter Schools; I agree to allow Mr. Schumacher access to my students at XXXXXXXXXX School. We will distribute the survey to our students/parents and assist Mr. Schumacher in retrieving the survey.

Mr. Schumacher has assured us that his study is: purely for academic purposes, that no one else will see the data, that he will share aggregate the results with us and that the participants will remain confidential and anonymous.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Principal
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SURVEY

This survey is designed to collect information on ways to improve the schools under the UMKC charter school system. Your input is greatly appreciated as we regard parental preferences and comments critical for high quality education in our schools, and for our children's future. The survey is broadly comprised of questions about your experience with the particular charter school your child attends, your reasons for selecting this school, your suggestions for improvements, and parental participation patterns.

The survey seeks no personally identifiable information. Please do not volunteer any such information on any part of the survey. All the responses will be treated as anonymous and will be kept strictly confidential. Please complete this survey for your **oldest** child. The survey takes about 10-15 minutes to fill out.

Thank you for your participation.

___

PART 1
SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND REASONS FOR CHOOSING YOUR SCHOOL

1. Current school your oldest child attends: _____

   a. Which grade? _____

   b. Do younger siblings also attend this charter school? _____Yes _____No

   c. If yes, how many?   Brothers_____   Sisters_____

2. Is your child new to this school or are they returning? _____New _____Returning

   If new, where did you attend school previously?
   1.   _____Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD)
   2.   _____Another charter school in KC. Please specify: _____
   3.   _____Other charter school outside of KC. Please specify: _____
   4.   _____Other public school district. Please specify: _____
   5.   _____Private school (parochial or other). Please specify: _____
   6.   _____Home school or other. Please specify: _____

3. How many years was your child enrolled in the KCMSD schools?   _____

4. How many years has your child been in any charter schools? _____

5. How many years have you had children in your current school? _____

6. Was your current school your first choice of charter school? _____Yes _____No

    If no, which charter school was your first choice? _____

7. Which KCMSD school would your child be mostly likely to attend at this point <u>if not for your current charter school?</u> Please specify the particular KCMSD school your child transferred from. Or, if he/she never enrolled in KCMSD, then specify the relevant KCMSD school near where you live: _____

8. If not a KCMSD school, then which other school would your child be mostly likely to attend at this point <u>if not for your current charter school?</u> _____

9. If there were no charter schools, would you prefer to move out of KCMSD?

Strongly prefer to stay		Perhaps move		Strongly prefer to move
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Almost never	Only sometimes	Most of the time	Almost always
10. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the officials (administrators, teachers, staff …) to do the "right thing" about problems at your current school?	1	2	3	4

	Not defend at all	Not very strongly	Somewhat strongly	Very strongly
11. If someone criticized the overall performance of your current school, how strongly would you defend the	1	2	3	4

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. Problems in my current school usually work themselves out?	1	2	3	4
13. People are *too quick* to blame school officials (administrators, teachers…) when things go wrong at my	1	2	3	4
14. I feel that the best thing to do is to believe in the honesty and wisdom of those who run my current school.	1	2	3	4
15. When there are problems at my school, it is useless to complain to officials (administrators, teachers…) at	1	2	3	4
16. I don't care what happens at my current school, as long as things are OK for me and my child.	1	2	3	4
17. I feel that my school cares a lot about me.	1	2	3	4
18. It is really worth paying attention to issues facing my current school because officials at the school do not just care about themselves.	1	2	3	4

	Agree	Disagree
19. Contacting school officials (administrators, teachers…) is the only way that I can have a say about how my	1	2
20. Sometimes issues and problems at my school seem so complicated that I can't really know what is going	1	2
21. I think school officials (administrators, teachers…) care much about what I think.	1	2
22. I feel that I don't have any say about what my current school does.	1	2

23. Please rate the following reasons in terms of importance for choosing your current school:

	Not at all important		Somewhat Important		Very important
Parental involvement	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher quality	1	2	3	4	5
Peers	1	2	3	4	5
Academic/curricular benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Extracurricular curricular opportnities	1	2	3	4	5
Location of school	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
Success of graduates	1	2	3	4	5
Safety	1	2	3	4	5
Social atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Extra amenities	1	2	3	4	5
Newness, inovativeness	1	2	3	4	5
School culture	1	2	3	4	5
Athletic activities	1	2	3	4	5
Non-athletic activities	1	2	3	4	5
Other, please specify:					
1 _____	1	2	3	4	5
2 _____	1	2	3	4	5
3 _____	1	2	3	4	5

PART 2
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

24. Please rate the following areas <u>again</u> in terms of needed improvements in your current school:

	No need for improvement		Moderate need for improvement		High need for improvement
Parental involvement	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher quality	1	2	3	4	5
Peers	1	2	3	4	5
Academic/curricular benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Extracurricular curricular opportnities	1	2	3	4	5
Location of school	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
Success of graduates	1	2	3	4	5
Safety	1	2	3	4	5
Social atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Extra amenities	1	2	3	4	5
Newness, inovativeness	1	2	3	4	5
School culture	1	2	3	4	5
Athletic activities	1	2	3	4	5
Non-athletic activities	1	2	3	4	5
Other, please specify:					
1 _____	1	2	3	4	5
2 _____	1	2	3	4	5
3 _____	1	2	3	4	5

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
25. Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that your school is doing its job at the moment?	1	2	3	4
26. If your child has been at this or another UMKC charter school previously, how satisfied were you in past years?	1	2	3	4

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
27. In general, how good a job do you feel your school is doing in accomplishing its mission?	1	2	3	4
28. If your child has been at this or another UMKC charter school previously, how would you rate the overall performance of that school in past years?	1	2	3	4

29. Please provide any comments concerning the <u>three most important</u> improvements you would like to see at your current school. Why these particular improvements? Do you have specific suggestions?

1.	Describe:
2.	Describe:
3.	Describe:

PART 3
PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

	Yes	No
30. Have you ever attnded a meeting or meetings called to discuss problems in your current school?	1	2
31. Have you ever participated in any organization, group, or task force atempting to solve problems in your	1	2
32. Have you ever helped organize a group or team to address problems at your current school?	1	2
33. Have you ever contacted a school official (administrators, teachers…) on any problem at your school?	1	2
34. Have you ever filed a formal request to call attention to particular problems at your current school?	1	2
35. Have you ever met informally with other parents, neighbors, and community members to work on solving problems at your school?	1	2

	Highly unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very likely
36. If significant problems emerged or remained unresolved at your current school, how likely are you to look for other schools for your child?	1	2	3	4
37. If significant problems emerged or remained unresolved at your current school, do you think moving your child to another school would resolve the issue for you?	1	2	3	4
38. How likely are other parents that you know to move their child out of your current school if significant problems emerged or remained unresolved at the school?	1	2	3	4
39. Broadly speaking, how likely is it for you to find other schools, including different school districts, in your area as opinions to send your child to if you were to leave your current school?	1	2	3	4

	None	A few	More than a few	A lot
40. How many of your acquiantances, including neighbors and friends, have children enrolled in your school?	1	2	3	4
41. How many close friends does your child have at his/her current school?	1	2	3	4

	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty attched	Totally committed
42. How attached do you feel to your current school?	1	2	3	4

	Very pleased	Pleased	Sorry	Very sorry
43. Suppose that for some reason you had to leave your school, how sorry or pleased would you be to leave?	1	2	3	4

PART 4
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions about the student.

44. Gender? _____Male _____Female

45. Race/ethnicity? _____Hispanic/Latino of any race
_____American Indian or Alaskan Native
_____Asian
_____Black or African American
_____Native Hawaii or other Pacific Islander
_____White
_____Mixed

46. Qualify for free or reduced-price lunch? _____Yes _____No

47. What is the household annual income? _____ less than $10,000
_____$10,001 - $20,000
_____$20,001 - $30,000
_____$30,001 - $40,000
_____$40,001 - $50,000
_____ more than $50,000

48. How many biological parents occupy the home? _____Two _____One _____Zero

49. What is the highest educational level achieved by the student's parents?

Father	Mother
_____Graduate degree	_____Graduate degree
_____College degree	_____College Degree
_____Associates Degree	_____Associates Degree
_____High School Diploma	_____High School Diploma
_____GED	_____GED
_____Other	_____Other

50. Are the parents (at least one) native to the KC area? _____Yes _____No

51. How many siblings does the student have in the home? _____

52. What is the student's post high school graduation objective at this point?
_____University
_____Junior College
_____Trade School
_____Military
_____Job Market
_____Other, please specify:

_____

—END—
THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATION

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