CHARTER SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' INFLUENCE ON THE RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION OF STUDENTS OF COLOR: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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by

Bernadette M. Anderson
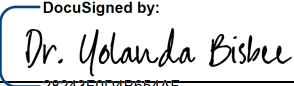

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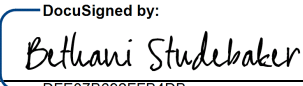Major Professor: Dr. Lynn Bohecker, Ph.D.

AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Bernadette Anderson, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "Charter School Principals' Influence on the Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color: A Qualitative Case Study," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

I first give glory to God for getting me to this point in my life in my education. I am so grateful and thankful for this study. It has truly changed me. I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Without your love and support this would not have been possible. This is also dedicated to my brother who has always been my loving elder loving me along my way. To my Uncle and Aunt this is for you both. Having attended every one of my graduation ceremonies, you both always encourage me to keep going while remaining true to my Nez Perce ways. For my mom and dad that have now gone on before me I say thank you for making education important. For my grandma who taught me the Nez Perce way of living I say thank you for making this degree my reality. For my grandpa thank you for taking me across the hills of Idaho watching you win the fiddle contests, and it is because of you I can always appreciate a rodeo. As a descendant of the Nez Perce Tribe, I will never forget who I am or where I come from.

"Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people and all have equal rights upon it."

Chief Joseph, Nez Perce Tribe

Washington D.C. on January 1879.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of six charter school principals in the Midwest of recruiting and retaining students of color and the other services that their schools offer to attract and maintain students of color. This study looked for meaning and themes within the lived experiences of the principals. This study asked the following research question: What are charter school principals' experiences to recruit and retain students of color in the Midwest through admission policies or practices, retention strategies, and offered services?

The researcher sought to understand through the lived experiences of principals leading students of color in charter schools. Phenomenological research cannot have a predetermined set of procedures but must be guided by the participants. For this reason, the researcher came to understand the lived experiences of each of the study's participants.

The first theme identified was recruitment outreach, with the two subthemes of community locations and purpose and design. The second theme, retention communication, had the two subthemes of progress reporting to students and parents and expectations. For the third theme, other services curriculum, the three sub themes of art, college and career readiness, and parent education were present. The fourth theme, leadership relationships, had the three subthemes of families, staff, and students. Finally, the fifth theme, school culture self-care, had the three subthemes of pre-pandemic self-care, pandemic self-care, and personal self-care. This study highlights the importance of charter school principals in recruiting and retaining students of color. It illustrates how important their actions are in the school community with the staff, teachers, students, parents, families, and community at large. This study points towards several areas of future research on charter school growth. These include:

- how charter school principals have influenced the curriculum during the pandemic,

- how local education agencies collaborate with charter school principals,

- what the overall impact of a charter school principal is upon college graduation rates,

- how self-care occurs at other charter schools so as to maximize opportunities to support all schools, and

- how other charter school principals recruit and retain students of color.

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Introduction

In the United States Constitution of 1791, education is not declared a constitutional right, yet it is expected that all children receive high-quality academic training (Kotok, Frankenberg, Schafft, Mann, & Fuller, 2017; Renzulli, 2006; Stetson, 2013; Teng, 2018). The role of states in providing and regulating education is mentioned in all state constitutions, but the individual right to an education is not. Nonetheless, during the past 20 years, the United States has seen a remarkable increase in charter school formation (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Kotok et al., 2017; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Vasquez Heilig, Holme, LeClair, Redd, & Ward, 2016). There are several factors that contribute to this increase in charter schools, including the lack of a constitutional right to an education, the achievement gap between Black and White students, the interpretation of education policy, federal policy, and the influence of wealthy individuals (Renzulli, 2006; Stetson, 2013; Teng, 2018). These factors contributing to growth have resulted in segregation. Current research indicates that the lack of a constitutional right to an education in particular is resulting in more segregation in charter schools (Renzulli, 2006; Stetson, 2013; Teng, 2018). Furthermore, this lack of a constitutional right to an education is resulting in state policies authorizing the creation of charter schools, thereby increasing the segregation of students of color which is why it is important to see what principals are doing (Dauber, 2013; Kotok et al., 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2013).

Ideas, values, and beliefs shape policy. Individuals who define problems with policy and influencing policy must move beyond self-interest by considering perspectives that may be different than their own (Adzima, 2014; Almond, 2012; Anderson & Holder, 2012; Brown & Makris, 2018). Factors influencing education policy include including studies, organizations,

people, and information sources (Layton, 2014). By examining an organization's values of self-interest (profit power), general social values (order, individualism), democratic values (liberty, equality, fraternity), and economic values (efficiency, economic growth, quality), researchers can gain insight into whether the organization adheres to one of the two main democratic ideologies (conservatism or liberalism) in the United States. An organization's ideology manifests in its criticisms of opposing views, its ideological vision, and its plan of action (Fowler, 2013; Neem, 2018).

Factors such as language also contribute to how policies are understood by the public. Research has been conducted on how to market Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to parents, students, educators, and communities, thereby influencing public perceptions. The findings suggest this marketing needs to be ongoing and occur through word of mouth, as well as in publications, presentations, print and web updates, media press releases, and sharing across networks (Saavedra & Steele, 2012). Language influences the public so explaining the criticisms of charter schools influences how individuals understand related policies (Layton, 2014; Neem, 2018). Another factor that influences public perceptions of policies is the media. Social media is a new platform shaping important political and social messages by providing streams of unfiltered conversations in ways that influence policymakers and turn popular opinion against charter schools (Neem, 2018; Supovitz & Reinkordt, 2017).

Factors contributing to the growth of charter schools are federal policy and wealthy influential citizens. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, and in 1979 the National Department of Education was created. Since its passage, the ESEA has been reauthorized and re-funded under various names such as Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Goals 2000, the 2002 No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) Act, and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Lee & Wu, 2017). When President George H. W. Bush assumed office, he assumed control of an educational system that had experienced a couple of major initiatives in the previous two decades. President George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) held an education summit with governors in Virginia in 1989. At the summit, they set education goals that collectively became known as America 2000. President Bush Sr.'s work with this summit paved the way for President Bill Clinton to sign legislation known as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994.

President Bush Sr. also pushed for accountability among schools, and President George Bush Jr.'s signing of NCLB in 2002 was pivotal to improving education in poor schools. President Bush Jr.'s administration launched a coherent strategy for reshaping education that built on President Clinton's reforms from 1994. With the past couple of reauthorizations of the ESEA, conservatives have sought to use organizations for entry into the arena of public education policy, bringing ideas like market-based education, assessments, and standards (Lee & Wu, 2017; McDonald, 2013). NCLB had lofty ambitions to have all children proficient in reading and math by 2014. President Barack Obama, once elected, offered states a waiver if they agreed to use test scores to evaluate teachers. This was very unpopular with educators and unions. Some legislators viewed this as an attempt to bypass them. However, when Congress reauthorized NCLB, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in 2015, the use of test scores in teacher evaluations remained.

In 2010, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released the CCSS for K–12 English language literacy and mathematics (Hodges, Roy, & Tyminski, 2018; Lee & Wu, 2017; Lopez & Wise, 2015; National Governors Association, 2018; Saavedra & Steele, 2012). President Obama

created a $4.35 billion grant competition known as the Race to the Top (RTTT). To some, it seemed that this infusion of money coerced the states into fast-tracking policies for the adoption of CCSS, college and career readiness standards, charter schools, and teacher evaluations based on student achievement scores (Lee & Wu, 2017; Stosich & Bae, 2018). The achievement testing consortia Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced), which were charged with developing standardized tests aligned with Common Core, were supported with $350 million.

In 2015 President Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. ESSA was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), formerly known as NCLB. ESSA provided local and state leaders greater flexibility in designing policies that met local needs (Lee & Wu, 2017; Stosich & Bae, 2018). This new law required all children to be taught to high academic standards that would prepare them for college and careers (Lee & Wu, 2017; Stosich & Bae, 2018). ESSA was thought to guarantee equal opportunities for all children (Kober, 2007; Stosich & Bae, 2018). States and local investments of resources varied depending on the wealth of the taxpayers residing within district boundaries (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Kober, 2007; Stosich & Bae, 2018). ESSA upholds protections for high-need and disadvantaged students by advancing equity (Stosich & Bae, 2018). Many districts rely on federal funds to provide extra support to children in need.

The creation of the CCSS to unify the various states' learning goals started with an examination of the best existing state standards and effective world models with rigorous content, as well as consultation with bipartisan state political leaders, educational leaders, teachers, influential thinkers, and the public (Hodges et al., 2018; Lee & Wu, 2017; Martin, Marchitello, & Lazarín, 2014; National Governors Association, 2018). The CCSS are

internationally benchmarked against best practices from countries like Korea and Finland because students in these countries perform best on international tests, and the CCSS is the most standards-based policy reform applied to public education in the United States in decades (Martin et al., 2014; Saavedra & Steele, 2012). Forty-five states adopted the CCSS, and implementation began in the 2011–2012 school year (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; National Governors Association, 2018; Saavedra & Steele, 2012). Standards-based education policy improves education by aligning educational content, performance, and opportunities to learn via the reform of instructional alignment and assessments while still allowing states to maintain some autonomy (Lee & Wu, 2017). The CCSS are unique in that numerous states implemented the same standards in their K–12 systems (Auck & Railed, 2016; Lee & Wu, 2017).

The national reform effort that is the CCSS is one of the factors currently influencing how the public understands policy (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2015). The CCSS and its tests align the national K–12 system such that the content to be learned, teaching techniques, lesson plans, textbooks, and assessments are seamless (Evers, 2015; Lee & Wu, 2017). It is essential to understand how this policy impacts teaching and learning (Lee & Wu, 2017). The CCSS changes how and what teachers teach along with their expectations for student learning, thereby changing the experience students have in the classroom (Martin et al., 2014; Timar & Carter, 2017). The CCSS provides teachers with the opportunity to pace a student's learning, allowing the student to investigate more thoroughly complex concepts and engage in discovery (Lopez & Wise, 2015; Martin et al., 2014; Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2015). The CCSS also allows for the necessary supports to enable instructional change so students can be taught reading and critical thinking skills, including how to use data to problem-solve. This helps students become better writers of constructed arguments (Martin et al., 2014; Timar & Carter, 2017). The CCSS gives parents the

confidence that their children are being taught with evidence-based standards (Martin et al., 2014).

For years, federal and state policymakers seeking solutions for educational reform have engaged wealthy individuals, some of whom support and others of whom oppose the CCSS (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Kurtz, Lloyd, & Harwin, 2019). In 2008, Gene Wilhoit, as the director of the CSSO, met with Bill Gates in Seattle and obtained support for the development of the CCSS (Layton, 2014). Another symbol of wealthy individuals influencing how the public understands the CCSS are think-tank organizations, which have grown in the United States due to philanthropic support for economic, political, and social policy research (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; McDonald, 2013). Only four conservative education think tanks existed prior to 1970, and by 2006, 56 existed (McDonald, 2013). The differences between think tanks and advocacy organizations are that think tanks conduct research, construct narratives, and are perceived as legitimate and credible by policymakers, media, and the public (McDonald, 2013). Many scholars indicate that think tanks wield power disproportionately in the arena of policy and media (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; McDonald, 2013). Another symbol of wealthy people exhibiting political power and influencing how individuals understand the CCSS is the involvement of teacher unions in explaining policy to the public (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Cowen & Strunk, 2014). State leaders need to write policies addressing the accountability of charter school leaders in order to demonstrate strong political leadership at a time when lobbyists and wealthy contributors seek to influence the charter school movement (Frankenberg et al., 2012; Renzulli, 2006; Rudo & Partridge, 2016; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016).

Several obstacles to implementing the CCSS exist, including two new assessments, the Smarter Balanced and the PARCC; the perception of the CCSS as too ambitious; differences in

readily available resources to support the implementation of the CCSS in suburban, rural, and urban districts; and numerous states' pending legislation to move away from the standards (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Lopez & Wise, 2015; Martin et al., 2014; Polikoff, 2017; Timar & Carter, 2017). Concerns over the implementation process range from parents and teachers' unfamiliarity with the standards, inadequate teacher support, teacher evaluations, the use of student performance data, principal evaluation systems, recruitment and hiring practices, and compensation, to professional development and career ladders (Martin et al., 2014; Saavedra & Steele, 2012). The CCSS became controversial after their initial implementation, and many educators, parents, and politicians began advocating for the repeal of the CCSS because of numerous disadvantages such as costs to taxpayers (Cochrane & Cuevas, 2015; Hodges et al., 2018).

With the growth of charter schools and the widening achievement gap between affluent and low-income students, policies creating more charter schools is viewed as resulting in more segregation of public schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Ritter et al., 2010; Roda & Wells, 2013). Achievement gaps among Black, Caucasian, Asian, and Hispanic students are consistently growing, and socioeconomic factors contribute to the education gap (Brown, 2004; Finley, 2015; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rotberg, 2014). Some scholars have found it to be academically harmful for students to attend racially segregated schools, and others have found that diverse schools benefit all (Almond, 2012; Frankenberg et al., 2012; Kotok et al., 2017; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015). One way to address the achievement gap is charter schools, which began in 1991 as a way to implement new curricular ideas while also addressing economic and social issues (Finley, 2015; Linsenmeyer et al., 2013; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rotberg, 2014).

Specifically identified as under-researched is charter school leadership (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Price, 2015). An area that merits special exploration is charter school principals' autonomous roles governing and serving as instructional leaders of their schools. Charter school principals are required to do more administrative duties, like facilities upkeep, than traditional principals (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Gawlik, 2018; Goodman, Orange, & Schumacher, 2017; Rudo & Partridge, 2016). Current literature on charter school principals identifies gaps in the research such as the practices in which building administrators are involved that contribute to charter schools' successful retention of families (Goodman et al., 2017; Price, 2015; Redden-Guyton, 2010; Stetson, 2013). Policymakers need timely research that they and others can easily digest (Polikoff, 2017; Price, 2015).

This study considers how the problem of segregation and charter schools is impacting the educational landscape in the United States. Some scholars have taken the position that segregation is not academically harmful given the complexities involved in charter schools that were designed for poor minority children (Eckes, 2015; Price, 2015). Values such as economic efficiency, individual liberty, and social justice are important for an educational leader in a democratic society, and it seems more needs to be understood about charter school principals in this national conversation about segregation and charter schools. This study investigates the lived experiences of charter school principals who lead children of color.

Research suggests charter school administrators who are committed to providing a high-quality education have a professional support system that includes merit pay for staff as well as an extended day for learning, are involved in policy and resource allocation decisions, and partner with others (Auerbach, 2009; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West, Peterson, & Barrows,

2017). Trust and respect are key team aspects for a charter school principal who is working in a school to solve problems, especially if the school is a low-performing school where pessimism and defeat have taken root (Center on School Turnaround, 2018; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011). Research on charter school principals should be used to advise legislatures about charter schools' administrative practices (Stein, 2015; West et al., 2017). This chapter discusses the problem of segregation and charter schools and the history of charter schools. It also provides information on the significance of the study and an overview of the research methods.

Statement of the Problem

Research for the past 20 years on school reform in the United States has created charter schools, which are public schools that are legislatively authorized at the state level to have greater control over their governance and operational flexibility (Eastman, Anderson, & Boyles, 2017; Kerstetter, 2016; Roch & Na, 2015). Segregation in charter schools is shaping federal and state policies, and the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of principals' parental involvement perceptions and the practices that are present. Although there is no constitutional right to an education, charter schools exist in 41 states as part of a market-based approach to school reform designed to respond to the inequalities in education (Bulman, 2004; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Davis, 2013; Dent, 2014; Guy, 2011; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Kerstetter, 2016). Traditional schools were viewed by parents as a monopoly and public school competition did not exist until policies creating charter schools began forcing traditional schools to reform themselves to achieve better student outcomes (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Almond, 2012; Roda, 2017; Stein, 2015). Charter schools are identified in the literature as a contributor to the rise of segregation due to their rapid enrollments, federal and state incentives, and wealthy contributors. Some believe these aspects make the schools a concern for civil rights, but others

are invested in charter expansion (Brown & Makris, 2018; de Sousa, 2013; Kotok et al., 2017; Rotberg, 2014; Teng, 2018).

Charter schools do more than traditional schools do to connect the school and home settings; however, strong evidence suggests an increase in segregation between groups of students, such as special education and language-minority students, is often reflected in the design of charter schools (Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rose & Stein, 2014; Rotberg, 2014; Teng, 2018). Research indicates that low-income minority students consistently experience significantly lower achievement than their Caucasian middle-class peers (Brown, 2004; Kahlenberg, 2013). The achievement gap in math between Asian and Caucasian students compared to Hispanic and Black students, along with the gap between low-income and high-income students, needs to be addressed, which is why research on charter school principals' perspectives is needed (DeJong & Love, 2015; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). The achievement gaps between Caucasians and minorities are pervasive, persistent, and large disparate (Brown, 2004; Finley, 2015; Kerstetter, 2016; Paul & Vaidya, 2014).

Research suggests that judicial oversight is one of the factors contributing to increased charter school segregation. For example, in Texas data from more than 1.8 million charter school students confirm segregation still exists 60 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (Ni, Sun, & Rorrer, 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Since most charter schools are in urban areas, some claim it is not the charter schools themselves creating segregation but the local demographics of the charter schools (Kotok et al., 2017; Ritter et al., 2010; Roda, 2017; Young, Dolph, & Russo, 2015). Legislation governing the charter school enrollment process favors literate parents, while students from low socioeconomic backgrounds

are limited in accessing charter schools, thereby leading to the segregation of students (de Sousa, 2013; Frankenberg et al., 2011; Garcia, 2008).

Parental involvement in schools is an important topic, with extensive research indicating its positive effects on student outcomes (Borup, 2016; Brown & Makris, 2018; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Lee, 2016; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015). The problem of segregation in charter schools and principals' views of parental involvement need to be further researched if scholars are to better understand the growth of charter schools (Beck, Maranto, & Lo, 2014; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Dauber, 2013; Davis, 2013). The purpose of this case study was to find out more about principals' parental involvement perceptions and the practices that are present. The increased segregation found in charter schools merits further investigation, particularly in relation to how charter school principals recruit and retain families.

Background

Federal policies such as NCLB and RTTT and the emergence of state-authorized charter schools have changed the structure of the U.S. public education system in an effort to address achievement gaps between students of different races, income levels, and ethnicities (Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Kerstetter, 2016; Linsenmeyer, Kelly, Jenkins, & Mattfeldt-Berman, 2013; Maloney, Batdorff, May, & Terrell, 2013; Rose, 2015; Rotberg, 2014). Implementing change using a systems approach requires one to examine the entire system and the components affected by the change (Eastman et al., 2017; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). It is important to design a system that is simple to monitor and whose non-functioning parts can be easily identified (Finley, 2015; Gawlik, 2018; Montague, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). Public charter schools were created via state policies as way to address achievement gaps and are

funded with public tax dollars (Davis, 2013, Eckes, 2015; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Kerstetter, 2016; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). Public charter schools receive funding exactly like traditional schools do (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Dent, 2014; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Roda, 2017; Toma & Zimmer, 2012).

Charter schools are referred to as market-based school choice options intended for low-income families of color, but middle-class families, too, have capitalized on policies promoting school choice (Bulman, 2004; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Roda, 2017). Segregation occurs as parents compete for places for their children at market-based charter schools designed to improve the academic achievement of students (Anderson, & Boyles, 2017; Eastman et al., 2017; Roda, 2017; Williams, 2017). Over the past 10 years, wealthier parents have supported urban schools and school reform with their finances and political capital (Brown & Makris, 2018; de Sousa, 2013; Kotok et al., 2017; Rotberg, 2014; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017). Some wealthy urban parents choose charter schools because of the schools' similarities to top private schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Bulman, 2004; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). Intentional segregation is one reason why charter school student growth is increasing, as are charter school mission statements geared towards parents' active involvement (Adzima, 2014; Almond, 2012; Anderson & Holder, 2012; Brown & Makris, 2018; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009).

Current research comparing charter schools to traditional schools by distance, proximity, type, enrollment data, and waiting lists reveals segregation still exists 60 years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Research provides various explanations as to why segregation exists, including that charter schools are started in segregated neighborhoods, the mission of charter schools appeals to certain families, and charter school recruitment policies target specific groups of students

(Adzima, 2014; Almond, 2012; Anderson & Holder, 2012; Glenn, 2011; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Charter schools have created opportunities for marginalized groups of parents to segregate, often based on equity or safety reasons (Auerbach, 2009; Brown & Makris, 2018; Eckes, 2015; Rudo & Partridge, 2016; Teng, 2018; West, Peterson, & Barrows, 2017). Segregation causes minority students to have less exposure to Caucasian children, furthering the discussion in the research on how segregation is defined. Is it defined by exposure to Caucasian students, and does the decline of exposure to Caucasian students constitute segregation? (Glenn, 2011; Straus & Lemieux, 2016; Young et al., 2015).

Research shows that a successful charter school learning organization consists of culture, instruction, and leadership (Kerstetter, 2016; Lawrence, 2014; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Montague, 2017). Culture and race are not the same, and school leadership urgently needs to focus on improving student learning (Almond, 2012; Center on School Turnaround, 2018; Stetson, 2013). "No excuses" charter schools are a subset of charter schools whose students are very successful on achievement tests (Kerstetter, 2016; O'Donnell & Swanson, 2016). Studies addressing high success specifically identify effective charter school principals as those who are change agents, build relationships with others, are trustworthy, are timely in giving feedback to staff during evaluations, and listen to other ideas (Montague, 2017; Nelson, 2018; Paul & Vaidya, 2014).

Research has determined which educational experiences and leadership skills are essential for charter school principals' success by identifying the types of preparation programs in which the principals have participated and the proactive strategies principals need to handle resistance from those opposed to charter schools. One of these strategies is the creation of a supportive network with which to share one's experience, emotionally support other principals,

and find encouragement (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Price, 2013; Theoharis, 2007). It is imperative to prepare school leaders beyond clinical experiences, cohorts, internships, case studies, and problem-based learning by employing alternative approaches such as cultural autobiographies, life histories, workshops that reduce prejudice, cross-cultural interviews, diversity panels, reflective analysis in writing, and educational plunges (Brown, 2004; Frankenberg et al., 2012; Wang, 2016). Ineffective charter school principals generally lack moral courage, are unorganized, fail to listen to concerns, are untimely with feedback, and are vindictive (Goodman et al., 2017; Montague, 2017; Price, 2013). Professionals need to have an identified role for transparency, equality in relationships with families, and able to understand the belief systems of families (Cetinkaya, 2016; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Lawrence, 2014). Policies present challenges for charter school administrators who have a desire for effective and meaningful community engagement (Bukoski et al., 2015; Fox, 2016; Holmes Erickson, 2017).

Charter school principals are responsible for supervising teachers, and teachers are the leading influence on a student's academic achievement. Thus, it can be detrimental to a student if the student has numerous ineffective teachers (Goodman et al., 2017; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017; Kahlenberg, 2013). Quality teachers are trustworthy, respectful of others, warm, supportive of others, and risk-taking with high expectations for students (Goodman et al., 2017; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Rose & Stein, 2014). While there have been numerous studies on effective charter-school teachers, studies on effective charter school principals are limited, especially when it comes to low-income charter schools (Goodman et al., 2017; Montague, 2017; Villavicencio, 2013).

Research on school choice options has shifted to include observations on the culture of poor minority families (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Almond, 2012; Bulman, 2004). Parents make

sense of school choices based on their past educational and religious experiences (Bulman, 2004; Guy, 2011). According to scholars, deregulation, local decision-making, and autonomy have a positive impact on educational reform; claims by those opposing charter schools that charter school minority parents are incapable of selecting a school based on needs of their own children are unfounded (Almond, 2012; Brown & Makris, 2018; Riley, 2000). Other scholars have discussed the impact of standardized tests on measuring success, with some arguing that the impact of standardized tests is influenced by other factors such as transfers back and forth between traditional and charter schools resulting in segregation (Dauber, 2013; Kotok et al., 2017; Stein, 2015; Toma & Zimmer, 2012).

African American or Black leaders in charter schools have higher perceptions of personal cultural competency than Caucasians (Khalil & Brown, 2015; Teasley, Archuleta, & Miller, 2014). Moreover, minority charter leaders who simultaneously address gender, race, and class oppression lead differently than those who do not (Santamaría, 2014; Stein, 2015; West et al., 2017). Multiculturalism in charter schools have not been well investigated in the scholarly literature (Anderson & Holder, 2012; Santamaría, 2014; West et al., 2017).

Traditional schools are viewed by parents as a monopoly, and opposition to charter schools did not exist until charter schools put pressure on traditional schools to reform themselves to achieve better student outcomes (Riley, 2000; Stein, 2015). Parent voice and choice is discussed in the research, with scholars defining how charter schools meet the unique needs of diverse students. The overall curriculum is the first reason that a parent selects a charter school; the second reason is the attitudes of the teachers (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Almond, 2012; Bulman, 2004; Riley, 2000). Charter school supporters claim charter schools expose students to a more comprehensive curriculum, including music, art, foreign languages, and

technology, and stress that wait lists are an indication of the need for more charter schools (Adzima, 2014; Roda, 2017; Siegel-Hawley, 2013).

When considering the kinds of students who are leaving traditional public schools and enrolling in charter schools, research indicates that charter-school parents are more satisfied with their children's schooling than traditional or district school parents are (Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Stein, 2015; West et al., 2017). Specifically, charter-school parents believe there are less behavioral interruptions to classroom teaching than district school parents do, and charter school parents report that communication is more extensive than traditional school parents do (Holmes Erickson, 2017; Stein, 2015; West et al., 2017). One explanation for the wait lists is that young parents favor charter schools. According to the 2012 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 78% of adults under 30 and 75% of 40-year-olds support charter schools, thereby increasing the demand for charter schools (Ni et al., 2015; Stetson, 2013).

Parental socioeconomic status contributes to segregation in charter schools because it is assumed that low-income parents make school choice decisions based upon factors such as location and course offerings or race and relationships rather than academic achievement (Holmes Erickson, 2017; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Pedro, 2015; Stein, 2015). Attendance and student outcomes improve remarkably when students are enrolled in a charter school in which the teachers are evaluated and held accountable and parents are volunteers in the classroom (Fox, 2016; Price, 2013; Riley, 2000). A social justice leadership framework benefits charter-school leaders whose urban charter schools serve students of color (Auerbach, 2009; Brown, 2004; DeJong & Love, 2015; Khalil & Brown, 2015). A social justice framework is needed as administrators seek to find ways to hire highly effective teachers during teacher shortages (DeJong & Love, 2015; Khalil & Brown, 2015).

U.S. culture is always evolving, and policies and laws, such as laws prohibiting segregation, have changed. Achievement scores indicate an achievement gap between White and Black students. In 2017, 45% of White students compared to 18% of Black students scored at or above proficient on the eighth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading achievement test (NAEP, 2019). The lack of research informing the public of charter-school principals' leadership practices and perceptions of parents in their schools is why this study matters in the charter-school movement discussion. Research suggests it is intentional segregation by parents that is causing charter school student growth to increase (Bukoski et al., 2015; Glenn, 2011; Straus & Lemieux, 2016; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Charter-school leaders need to understand how interventions with minority populations contribute to student outcomes (Frankenberg et al., 2011; Jabbar, 2015; Teasley et al., 2014). Parental involvement practices surrounding segregation patterns and charter school growth are a gap in the research. Specifically, it is crucial to investigate the influence that a charter school principal has in recruiting and retaining students of color.

Research Question

Research shows that aspiring leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers need to take into consideration the voices of minority leaders since such leaders bring a wealth of experience to the conversation about moving from theory to practice. This is why the researcher, as a leader who is also an indigenous person of color, is conducting this study (Santamaría, 2014; West et al., 2017). Recognizing that segregation has increased because of charter schools and that there is a lack of research indicating what charter school principals do to recruit and retain students of color, this study poses the following question:

What are charter school principals experiences to recruit and retain students of color in the Midwest through admission policies or practices, retention strategies, and offered services?

Description of Terms

A shared understanding of the terms that are present within the peer-reviewed literature surrounding charter schools is necessary to foster dialogue (Campbell & Rogalin, 2006). The following list of terms captures the terms' meanings and uses within this research study.

Charter school. A public school funded by tax dollars and authorized to operate within a state by legislation authorizing the establishment of the school (Cetinkaya, 2016).

Charter school authorizer. An entity authorized by state policy to award charter school contracts to establish charter schools (Rebarber & Zgainer, 2014).

Charter school management organization. An organization that only manages a charter school and may hold the authorized charter or be a subcontractor to a charter board (Stetson, 2013; Whitmire, 2016).

Charter schools serving delinquent youth. Charter schools specially designed to serve youth who have behavioral needs (Renzulli, 2006).

Climate. Attitudes and perceptions collectively of a group of people. (Center on School Turnaround, 2018)

Conversion charter schools. Charter schools working in conjunction with school districts to turn around low-performing schools (Gawlik, 2018; Price, 2013).

Culture. Culture is social behavior patterns and are critical to fostering cohesion and promoting successful student outcomes. A negative culture breeds dysfunction, neglect, and

disappointment, leading to the blaming of other stakeholders for failure (Center on School Turnaround, 2018, Cetinkaya, 2016).

Cultural competency. The U.S. government defines cultural competency as attitudes, behaviors, and policies supporting working with others effectively (Jabbar, 2015; Walton, 2011).

Cultural responsiveness. The recognition of how student learning is influenced by cultural beliefs and practices (Center on School Turnaround, 2018).

Educational management organization. A for-profit or not-for-profit entity that manages a charter school on behalf of a charter school board (Roch & Na, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Nelson, 2018).

Prestige charter school. A charter school that caters to the wealthy by mirroring private schools (Brown & Makris, 2018).

Racism. The use of power by a dominant racial group against a nondominant racial group (Carter, Roberson, & Johnson, 2020).

Segregation. Isolation of students based on race, socioeconomic status, or language ability (Dauber, 2013; Frankenberg et al., 2012; Kotok et al., 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2013).

Standalones. Charter schools that are run by independent charter boards that hold the authorized charters (Roch & Na, 2015).

Traditional school. A public school governed by state statute and that is not a charter school (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Almond, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study fosters a better understanding of the practices of charter school principals and the reasons that parents select and keep their children enrolled in charter schools. Parental choice seems to be a determining factor in charter school selection (Eckes, 2015; Ford & Ihrke, 2015). In 2010, only 14% of Latino and 20% of African American students aged 25 or older had completed at least four years of college at a four-year institution. Research demonstrates the struggles minority students must endure in becoming college-ready, from overcoming financial obstacles to finding the personal ambition to attend college (Ford & Ihrke, 2015; Perez-Felkner, 2015).

Multiple reasons like charter school design and parents' desire to be with like parents are cited in the literature on how charter schools are contributing to the rise of segregation. Exploring what charter school principals are specifically doing to recruit and retain students of color sheds light on charter school growth. While research indicates that segregation is a result of school choice state policies authorizing charter schools, the design, judicial oversight, student enrollment policies, intentional segregation, and mission statements of charter schools appeal to a certain type of family. Charter schools have been founded in segregated neighborhoods. Other characteristics of charter schools that contribute to increasing segregation include charter school recruitment policies, ineffective charter school leaders, charter school principals' lack of knowledge about community engagement, and parental socioeconomics.

Gaps in the research on charter schools related to segregation include the practices and perceptions of charter school principals, leadership of charter school principals, and parental involvement in charter schools. Further gaps include other charter school factors contributing to the increase in segregation, low-income students' experiences in charter schools, the charter

school movement's impact, and ways that charter school policy is being impacted across state lines. Further research is also needed on charter school boards' perceptions of segregation, charter school recruitment practices creating segregation, charter school principals' role in directing teachers to reach out to families, charter schools versus traditional schools, charter school wait lists, and the relationship between parental involvement and parent engagement in charter schools. Some under-researched areas specifically related to charter school principals are leadership, role autonomy, practices to retain students, views of parental involvement, leadership in low-income schools, and multicultural leadership in charter schools.

This study may be useful to institutions of higher education that are designing charter school administrator programs. Some may find this study helpful as a foundation for larger studies that examine segregation patterns more closely so that legislatures are more fully informed. This study may also be significant for those seeking to find out about current research concerning segregation, charter schools, and parental involvement. This study brings a diverse voice to the body of research addressing the phenomenon of charter schools serving children of color. This study may be useful to higher education researchers examining segregation in education or those researching charter schools. It may be useful to graduate students researching charter school principals. This study may be helpful to those entities, including researchers and teachers, seeking to conduct larger studies on or more closely examine charter school parents and segregation. Federal and state policymakers may find this study timely for background research on charter school policy. This study may also be useful for those seeking to find a diverse voice in the research on segregation and charter school principals. The aim of this study is to create space in charter school leadership research for those underrepresented in the literature. By

conducting this study, the researcher is able to capture the experiences of charter school principal's practices of recruiting and retaining students of color.

Overview of Research Methods

Charter schools are growing across the United States and are viewed as school reform and school choice options for low-income minority students in low-performing schools. This qualitative study of charter school principals contributes to researchers' understanding of charter schools by identifying the practices and perceptions of charter school principals related to recruiting and retaining students of color. The research design of the study consists of identifying the basis for the research, the type of research, the methodology, the data collection process, the findings, any researcher biases, and the practical application of the findings and recommendations (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2013).

Selecting participants, obtaining appropriate permissions, identifying the types of information that were needed, and collecting data were important steps in designing this qualitative study (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). Participants were recruited through referrals from colleagues in three Midwestern states. Appropriate permissions were obtained from all participants. Since the participants were principals, consent was obtained only from the individuals and not the governing boards. Identified types of information that were needed for the study were state school report cards, school websites, and the principals' various lengths of tenure at their charter schools.

Qualitative data collection consisted of organizing the stories of the participants, or the data, and using coding to understand and better interpret the data. Data immersion, case studies, case summaries, and explorations of alternative understandings of the data were also used. Before the findings section was written, the data were member-checked in order to provide rich

descriptions. To ensure credibility in writing, the research question was reflected upon and described in concrete terms. Concrete examples of how categories were generated and coded in the data, along with how comparisons were made, are given. In conducting a qualitative research study, it is important to consider whether researcher bias may affect data interpretation. All notes about the data were stored in a safe or electronically on encrypted computer files whose password was known only to the researcher.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

With the growth of charter schools and a widening achievement gap between affluent and low-income students, the school choice policy promoting more charter schools is viewed as contributing to the greater segregation of public schools based on race and income because wealthy parents are choosing charter schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). Over the past 10 years, some affluent parents have supported urban charter schools and school reform with their finances and political capital because they see charter schools as similar to top private schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Riley, 2000). There is extensive data on the reasons districts grant charter schools, the necessary legislation, the evolution of charter schools across the country, and the rationales guiding both sides of the school choice debate (Witte, Schlomer, & Shober, 2007). Further research on segregation in charter schools for low-income minority children and the charter school movement's impact on communities is needed (Brown & Makris, 2018; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). This literature review synthesizes current research on the history of charter schools, the social contexts of the pros and cons of charter schools, the relationship between segregation and charter schools, parental involvement in charter schools, and the role of the charter school principal. In terms of the relationship between segregation and charter schools, this study looks particularly at charter schools' impact on segregation, causes of segregation in charter schools, charter school boards' role in segregation, and parental decisions' impact on segregation. These components of the literature review are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Literature Review Components*
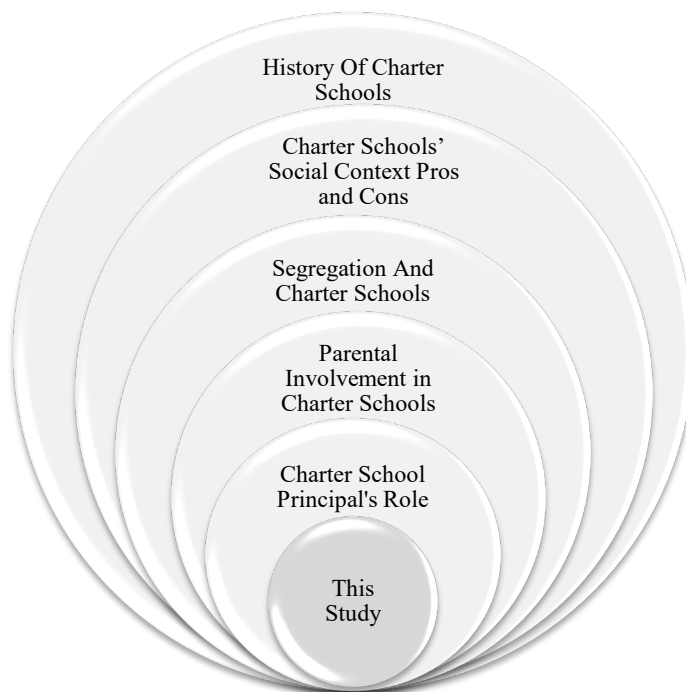
History of Charter Schools

Researchers have traced the evolution of charter schools to 1852 when Massachusetts became the first state mandating school attendance. Approximately 20 years later, all 31 states followed suit, mandating schooling but leaving parents to decide whether their children would attend a public or private school (Fox, 2016; Little, 2007; Ni et al., 2015; Stetson, 2013). In the 1970s, the option for home education was introduced. In 1991, school options expanded when Minnesota was the first state to enact legislation authorizing what are now known as charter schools. Charter schools are referred to as the school choice movement by some (Ni et al., 2015; Riley, 2000; Witte et al., 2007).

The charter school movement was viewed by some policymakers as a pilot experiment that resulted in a major public education policy shift. By 2011, 41 states along with the District

of Columbia had passed legislation authorizing the funding of charter schools. Parents were given the opportunity to use public dollars to exercise school choice for their children (Brown & Makris, 2018; Ni et al., 2015; Stetson, 2013). In the United States, 5,600 charter schools existed in the 2011–2012 school year, enrolling two million students (Price, 2013). According to the 2018 National Center for Educational Statistics, 7,427 charter schools serve over 3.1 million students.

Charter schools are legislatively authorized to serve children by either a state department, local education agency, higher education institution, or another allowable entity identified in state legislation such as a charter management organization, which is an entity privately operated with the permission of an authorizing legal entity (Kerstetter, 2016; Stetson, 2013; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). There are various types of authorized charter schools such as standalones, charter management organizations, online, special curriculum focuses, home schooling charter schools, charter schools serving delinquent youth, conversion charter schools, and prestige charter schools; there are also various kinds of networks of charter schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Renzulli, 2006; Thomas & Lacey, 2016; Witte et al., 2007). One type of charter school is known as a haven charter school. Haven charter schools are defined by three focused categories, such as ability, culture, and gender or sexual orientation. These schools are viewed as niche charter schools where students may be segregated by focus (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Eckes, 2015).

During the past 20 years, researchers have further categorized charter schools by their governance structure, school design, and management plans (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Eckes, 2015; Stetson, 2013). Charter school governance structures depend on the approved charter application; the schools may be governed by nonprofits, for-profits, management organizations, or the local district (Dent, 2014; Riley, 2000; Roch & Na, 2015; Witte et al., 2007). Charter

school designs vary in grade configuration, location, student enrollment patterns, the specific teacher–to–student ratio, minority enrollment, work environment (especially in a charter management organization), the level of autonomy of teachers, staff pay, and the presence of unions—all of which also contribute to the management plans (Dent, 2014; Riley, 2000; Roch & Na, 2015; Witte et al., 2007).

Charter Schools' Social Context

Pros of Charter Schools

Research reveals school choice options have evolved into the charter school movement and charter school proponents' position is that educational needs and services are better matched when a choice charter school has greater freedom from local regulations (Ni et al., 2015; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017; Witte et al., 2007). Charter schools' support is mainly based upon their ability to embrace innovative autonomy. This is why they have grown in the United States (Ni et al., 2015; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017). Advocates for charter schools in the United States often point to statistics on state charter school legislation, the variety of charter school management systems, successful educational practices in classrooms, and the increase in charter school management organizations when advocating for more charter schools (Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017; Witte et al., 2007).

Charter schools are the fastest-growing segment of the education market, and support for charter schools is often based upon their ability to operate successfully in the marketplace by producing better student outcomes than traditional schools (Ni et al., 2015; Redden-Guyton, 2010; West et al., 2017). Charter school supporters with this marketplace view believe charter schools are supplying parents with various alternatives to traditional schools (Ni et al., 2015;

Riley, 2000; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017). A study on 170

standalone charter schools detailed how the marketplace has been favorably impacted by

legislation authorizing charter schools (Roch & Na, 2015). The U.S. national charter school

movement has parallels in other countries, as countries like England, Sweden, and New Zealand

have school choice options through education markets, too (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Carpenter

& Peak, 2013; Riley, 2000). Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, charter

schools constituted one major reform initiative, allowing for the three basic principles of

flexibility, choice, and accountability to be implemented (Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Kerstetter,

2016; Nelson, 2018; Price, 2013; Rose, 2015). Support for founding more charter schools came

via the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative, which was viewed as

an attempt to improve schooling by creating more charter schools and providing financial

incentives to charter school staff (Finley, 2015; Kerstetter, 2016; Rose, 2015; Vasquez Heilig et

al., 2016).

Cons of Charter Schools

Those in opposition to the establishment of more charter schools point to the fact that the

existing charter school research is inconclusive regarding the effects such schools have on

student achievement. They insist more than autonomy and competition are needed for schools to

be effective (Ni et al., 2015; Toma & Zimmer, 2012; Whitmire, 2016). The complexity of the

opposition to charter school growth has been captured in national case studies (Roch & Na,

2015; Whitmire, 2016; Young et al., 2015). Specifically, in 2012, the Florida Department of

Education reported 518 charter schools existed, 100 charter schools had opened during 2010–

2012, and 192 charter schools had closed their doors (Thomas & Lacey, 2016; Williams, 2017).

Finances were the primary reason they had closed, followed by low academic achievement and

then low enrollment (Powers, 2017; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Another example of the opposition

to charter school growth is the hostile relationship that the Los Angeles Unified School District

in California has with the charter school management organizations currently operating within its

boundaries (Roch & Na, 2015; Whitmire, 2016). This district's opposition to more charter

schools is due to a lack of effective charter schools and the local politics of some wealthy parents

lobbying for more charter schools financed by billionaires (Roch & Na, 2015; Whitmire, 2016).

Opponents of the charter school movement contend charter schools take away funding

from traditional schools, which hurts students left in the traditional schools (Toma & Zimmer,

2012; Whitmire, 2016; Williams, 2017). Negative views of charter schools stem from the

instructional time differences between charter and traditional schools; the oversight of charter

schools by their authorizers, including the relationship between the charter schools and the

authorizers in the written contracts; and charter schools' impact on international education

initiatives (Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Rebarber & Zgainer, 2014; Toma & Zimmer, 2012).

Researchers point to the need for further studies on the opposition to charter schools. More

studies across state lines are especially needed given the importance of policy. Policy impacts

charter school educational practices, and differing policies create different learning environments

(Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Toma & Zimmer, 2012).

Segregation and Charter Schools

Charter schools' impact on segregation

In the United States, charter schools are more segregated than any other type of school

(Finley, 2015; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). The 1964 Civil Rights Act was intended to prevent

discrimination based on race. *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) determined that segregation

based on race violated the U.S. Constitution's declaration of equal rights, even though education

is not a constitutional right (Glenn, 2011; Teng, 2018; Williams, 2017). Sixty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* declared segregation in public education unconstitutional, segregation has increased in charter schools in the 41 states and the District of Columbia that have charter school legislation (Kotok et al., 2017; Teng, 2018; Williams, 2017). Research showcases the impact of charter schools on segregation (Finley, 2015; Kotok et al., 2017; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Sixty years after the landmark education decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, charter school state policy led to increased segregation in Texas (Finley, 2015; Teng, 2018; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016; Williams, 2017).

Researchers have examined demographic patterns of segregation between traditional schools and charter schools for districts' neediest students and the accessibility of the most highly esteemed charter schools to the most needy or vulnerable students, revealing segregation exists in charter schools (Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Other researchers have found that charters have little impact on disparities related to race in schools (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Teng, 2018). Research shows that from 2000–2001 to 2013–2014 in high-poverty schools—defined as 75–100% students receiving free or reduced lunch—charter schools became increasingly racially segregated. African Americans were predominant (61%) in these high-poverty schools, resulting in traditional schools' attendance rates decreasing from 94% to 81%. By attending a charter school, a student may receive a better education because charter schools located in areas of greater poverty have better testing outcomes than traditional schools, contradicting critics who claim charters are racially exclusive and attract only the best students (Riley, 2000; Teng, 2018).

Causes of segregation in charter schools

Causes of segregation in charter schools are revealed in research as hindering the historical *Brown v. Board of Education* decision regarding educating Black children (Finley, 2015; Williams, 2017). Researchers have suggested that national and international financial interests rather than concern for African American children receiving an education (Finley, 2015; Williams, 2017). According to some scholars, the basic tenet of the school choice movement is to transform the traditional school system into a marketplace that is semi-public, and innovation and flexibility are key for entrepreneurs in this marketplace (Eastman et al., 2017; Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). False assumptions about a marginalized group's capacity to select a charter school are not supported by rational choice theory (Eastman et al., 2017; Finley, 2015).

Charter schools are viewed by some as part of the neoliberal agenda which is defined as favoring policies promoting capitalism, deregulation, and reduced government costa. (Roda, 2017; Williams, 2017). Neoliberalism fails to account for the relationship between market-based charter schools and increased segregation (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Williams, 2017). Social class and mandated testing are also absent from the neoliberalist agenda. The neoliberal agenda does not account for the increase in segregation in high-poverty urban charter schools, either (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018). Middle-class Caucasian parents report being very highly satisfied with quality of dual-language programs offered in charter schools, indicating that their power of choice does not align with the prevailing neoliberal logic of school choice (Eastman et al., 2017; Roda, 2017).

Scholars have suggested charter schools promote the segregation of students previously integrated into traditional schools by pointing to the fact that African American students attend

segregated charter schools at a higher rate than they do traditional segregated public schools, as reported by the Harvard Civil Rights Project (Finley, 2015; Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Research indicates that ethnic groups are targeted for charter schools, even though services exclude groups of students and programming is designed to appeal to families of a certain ethnicity, such as the desire for parents to be involved (Finley, 2015; Stein, 2015).

There is a widening achievement gap between rich and poor students in the United States, and state policies authorizing charter schools causes more segregation based on race and wealth (de Sousa, 2013; Rotberg, 2014; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Charter schools for low-income students of color were intended to be more academically challenging; however, charter schools were reported to underenroll special populations compared to traditional schools, increasing segregation (Rotberg, 2014; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Research indicates segregation based upon race for charter schools versus traditional schools exists and that on average, students attending charter schools demonstrated significant shifts in analyzing the causes of racial inequality (Ritter et al., 2010; Seider et al., 2016). Since charter schools are growing in poor communities, true levels of segregation are underestimated by policymakers (Ritter et al., 2010; Seider et al., 2016).

Another cause of segregation in charter schools is state policies requiring school districts to ensure charter schools reflect their districts' demographics and offer equal access to students, including African American students, which suggests the success of a charter school may be issued based in part on the environment that legislates the charter school (Renzulli, 2006; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). School segregation increased in Delaware after the desegregation orders for the state schools were issued released (Glenn, 2011). From a statewide impact perspective, it was

white people leaving from Wilmington schools that increased segregation, not the elimination of the desegregation orders (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Dent, 2014; Glenn, 2011; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Roda, 2017; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Most students in cities attend segregated schools, and fleeing a segregated traditional school does not imply that a charter school policy is imposing segregation (Ritter et al., 2010; Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Williams, 2017).

Researchers at the Civil Rights Project found that the segregation of African Americans in all schools has increased for 20 years and that African American students are more likely to be educated in intensely segregated settings (Ritter et al., 2010; Rotberg, 2014; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). White parents less frequently choose integrated schools compared to Black parents. These decisions may not be racially motivated; academic performance of a school may be key (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio 2016; Williams, 2017). Another vulnerable population represented in the charter school segregation research is the 700,000 Native Americans including Alaskan and Hawaiian students attending charter schools and the existing tensions between colonial perspectives and Native American perspectives. It is challenging for charter schools to connect to the culture and wellness of the community while meeting state requirements (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Pedro, 2015; Walton, 2011).

Charter school boards' role in segregation

Scholars have examined varying conditions in relation to how the education marketplace has been impacted by legislation authorizing charter schools. This legislation grants charter school boards the authority to determine the governance structures and operations for various charter school types (Roch & Na, 2015; Whitmire, 2016). Charter school management organizations and standalone governing boards have grown rapidly in urban and rural areas across the nation, revealing identifying national racial trends (Renzulli, 2006; Roch & Na, 2015;

Rotberg, 2014; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016; Whitmire, 2016). Local demographic changes, increased segregation among groups of students, the impact of segregation at the district level, segregation reflected in the designs of charter schools, and increased segregation for special education and language-minority students reveal national segregation trends that affect charter schools (Renzulli, 2006; Roch & Na, 2015; Rotberg, 2014; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016; Whitmire, 2016).

Charter school boards make decisions on behalf of children, but very little research has been done about the perceptions of charter school board members as they relate to segregation in the board members' own charter schools. Charter school boards hire principals, and principals can help to create diverse student populations and maintain racially balanced student populations (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2016; Williams, 2017). Three strategies principals use include targeted recruitment, the adoption of a mission that is curriculum-centered, and particular interpretations of state enrollment policies for charter schools (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio 2016; Williams, 2017). By using these strategies, principals can successfully attract more diverse student populations (Roda, 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2016; Williams, 2017).

From an equity perspective, adult supremacy, which is a set of attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices, perpetuates adults' power to make decisions about resources that limit youth (DeJong & Love, 2015; Williams, 2017). Youth have a lesser status in society than adults, as indicated by their lack of access to privilege, power, and opportunities (DeJong & Love, 2015; Teng, 2018; Williams, 2017). Adults make decisions for youth, and oppression is rooted in age (Eckes, 2015; Parrott & Cohen, 2020; Williams, 2017). Whether charter school leaders make

decisions about state-sponsored segregation in charter schools by recruiting from one type of student population needs to be further researched (Eckes, 2015; Williams, 2017).

Parental decisions' impact on segregation

Time has brought change to traditional schools in the form of charter schools, and specifically the new professional position of the charter school princpal who must recruit students to attend a given school (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Dent, 2014; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Roda, 2017; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Views about the creation of the charter school movement are shifting policies regarding how public education is provided; the parent is viewed as the decisionmaker when it comes to school choice options. The selection of charter schools rather than traditional public schools results in segregation (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Dent, 2014; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Roda, 2017; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Policies designed to balance the racial makeup of schools do not exist, leaving parents to fend for themselves. Research indicates most parents would like their children to attend ethnically diverse schools in preparation for an increasingly global society; however, when Caucasian parents select schools, they select schools that are predominantly Caucasian (Bulman, 2004; Roda & Wells, 2013; Williams, 2017). Research supports R that culture gives parents a framework for understanding education (Bulman, 2004; Roda & Wells, 2013).

Scholars have examined which sources of information influence parents to move their children from a traditional school to a charter school, and specifically whether segregation is impacted by wealth and language (Almond, 2012; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Teng, 2018). Reasons that parents transfer their children from traditional schools to charter schools include parental concern over student development, unchallenging coursework, the climate of the school, considerations regarding the value of the investment of resources, and a lack of personalized

learning (Dauber, 2013; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Williams, 2017). School choice research has examined culture and school choice through the lens of culture, and in particular, how interests, values, consumer preferences, and cultural interpretive aspects influence charter school parents when making choice decisions for their children (Almond, 2012; Bulman, 2004; Finley, 2015).

Distinctions exist between parents opting to enroll their children in charter schools and those not exercising choice options (de Sousa, 2013; Finley, 2015). The distinctions are the levels of wealth and knowledge parents possess. Others are similarly resistant to this idea, implying they are indifferent to serving vulnerable populations and resulting in segregation at charter schools (de Sousa, 2013; Finley, 2015; Roda & Wells, 2013).

Currently legislation governing the charter school enrollment process favors more literate parents (de Sousa, 2013; Finley, 2015; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have limited access to charter schools because the enrollment process for students requires parents or guardians to take the initiative to apply to charter schools. Vulnerable students are left in traditional schools when their parents do not initiate the enrollment process for a charter school (de Sousa, 2013; Dent, 2014; Finley, 2015; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Deregulation, local decision making, and autonomy have a positive impact on educational reform. Research does not support claims made by those opposing charter schools that charter schools' minority parents are incapable of selecting a school based on needs of their own children (Finley, 2015; Riley, 2000; West et al., 2017). Various researchers seem to agree that parental decisions impact segregation and charter schools. This is why further research that attends to charter school principals' perceptions of parental involvement is necessary.

Parental Involvement in Charter Schools

Considering the historical context of school choice and the charter school movement, current research was examined for information regarding parental involvement as it pertains to the correlation between student outcomes and parents. The educational research community agrees a correlation exists between higher student achievement and parental involvement programs in preschool, elementary, and secondary schools (Jeynes, 2012; Redding, 2008; Roda & Wells, 2013). Researchers have found urban and rural charter school administrators have a moral commitment to social justice and educational equity. This commitment leads them to pursue family engagement activities in their schools and to distinguish between parental involvement and parental issues. Principals see the former as proactive and the latter as reactive (Auerbach, 2009; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Redding, 2008; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West et al., 2017).

Parental involvement models pertaining to school choice decisions are also emerging (Auerbach, 2009; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009; Wei, Patel, & Young, 2014). Research reports parent–principal interactions constitute only 13% of public school principals' time. Other studies identify parents as active consumers of education who make school choice decisions that are tailored to their needs, and how parental involvement impacts leadership and social justice (Hoyer & Sparks 2017; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West et al., 2017). Other researchers have sought to understand the growth of charter schools by studying the views of those parents enrolling their children in charter schools as they pertain to parental satisfaction regarding student discipline, teacher quality, and other charter, traditional, and private school characteristics (Beck et al., 2014; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West et al., 2017). Teachers' efforts to engage parents in their children's classroom lessons indicate charter schools do more

than traditional schools to connect school and home; however, it is unclear what accounts for the difference (Fox, 2016; Rose & Stein, 2014).

There is also research on what successful parental involvement in charter schools looks like in educational leadership. Research also found culturally relevant approaches by the principal supported parent involvement by supporting teachers as they engage families in the school's programs (Auerbach, 2009; Lee, 2016; Redding, 2008; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West et al., 2017). Research also identifies contracts among teachers, parents, and students; charter school administrators' engagement with elected officials; and various forms of communication, such as classroom meetings with parents (Auerbach, 2009; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; West et al., 2017). Parental involvement opportunities are one reason parents select charter schools (Brown & Makris, 2018). Researchers who reviewed the literature to define a prestige charter school model that would be attractive to advantaged families because of urban renewal efforts identified parental involvement opportunities such as participating in the founding of the school, grant writing, serving as board members, and working at the school (Beck et al., 2014; Brown & Makris, 2018; Stein, 2015).

The Charter School Principal's Role

The growth of charter schools is increasing the demand for charter school principals, and they need to be trained as highly effective leaders (Jabbar, 2015; Price, 2013). As the most important individual in the school, the charter school principal determines the success of the school and sets the tone, culture, and behavior of all in the school (Cetinkaya, 2016; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017; Jabbar, 2015; Price, 2013). A successful charter school has a school culture led by a strong, trusting leader with a tremendous number of parents who are involved (Jabbar, 2015; Montague, 2017). Attributes of an effective school leader include political understanding, focus,

leadership, energy, resilience, a sense of urgency, resourcefulness, dedication, and managerial competence, all of which contribute to the school culture (Cetinkaya, 2016; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017; Jabbar, 2015; Montague, 2017; Price, 2013). Research on creating a safe school climate and an embracing culture supports that the principal is a critical influence on parents' decisions to keep their children enrolled in charter schools and discusses how leadership practices impact principal turnover rates in charter schools (Ni et al., 2015; Price, 2015).

In addition to the implementation of a variety of practices designed to impact student outcomes, culture development is part of the charter school principal's role (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Jabbar, 2015; Price, 2015). Educational researchers use the analogy of a stream underground a school that consists of beliefs, values, rituals, and traditions built over time. This stream influences the actions and behaviors of all at the school. Anthropologists define culture as a multifaceted process involving politics, economy, religion, biology, and psychology (Center on School Turnaround, 2018; Walton, 2011). The U.S. government defines cultural competency as attitudes, behaviors, and policies supporting working with others effectively (Jabbar, 2015; Walton, 2011).

Administrative practices, specifically those of the charter school principal, are worthy of exploration in this literature review. Charter school principals need to have knowledge of the practices and procedures for starting a new charter school and serving as a charter school leader who is both a manager and educator (Gawlik, 2018; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Charter school principal leadership research is scarcein the areas of charter school principals' autonomy in governing schools, the impact of having less time to serve as the instructional leaders of their schools, and principals' role in the takeover of charter schools (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Gawlik, 2018). Another task of a charter school principal (if they are also the

founder of the school) is the creation of a unique dual-role experience that requires resolve to overcome challenges due to the original desire in founding the charter school (Rudo & Partridge, 2016; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Research shows that resource distribution is determined by principals, and their decisions are critical since they are the ones that determine the adequacy of the resources (Auerbach, 2009; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Wang, 2016; West et al., 2017).

Given that wealthy parents are supporting charter schools, researchers seek to better understand the use of time by charter school principals. This understanding is critical to learning more about the growth of charter schools (Brown & Makris, 2018; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics at the Institute of Education Sciences' findings on public school (including charter school) principals' use of time for 2011–2012 reveal that there is less time allotted to student and parent interactions and teaching-related tasks than there is to internal administrative tasks (Gawlik, 2018; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). This is an interesting glimpse into how the principal's role contributes to the charter school climate.

Research indicates the charter school principal's role is part of an administrative structure that is different than that of traditional schools (Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). The Race to the Top (RTTT) grant was a federal market-based approach to restructuring public school administration for incentive-based school reform (Davis, 2013; Finley, 2015; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016). Charter schools receiving the pay incentive grant-funded RTTT from the U.S. Department of Education were evaluated using feedback surveys, interview protocols, qualitative semi-structured interviews, on-site visits 2–3 days a week for four years, observations, cluster groups, attendance at leadership team meetings and professional development sessions, and student data. This signals a research interest in understanding more about charter school principals' experiences (Finley, 2015; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016).

Other research explores social interactions among teachers, principals, and communities by examining teachers' perceptions of students' school engagement and how principals' interaction with teachers influences students enrolled in charter schools (Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Personal beliefs and mutual trust are critical to the relationship between principal and teacher (Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Price, 2015; Rose & Stein, 2014; Rotberg, 2014; Teng, 2018). Principals who provide timely feedback, are honest and trustworthy leaders, are readily available to assist staff, and effectively communicate influence the overall effectiveness of their charter schools (Montague, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rotberg, 2014). How a school is shaped and maintained by a charter school principal, including the principal's capability to form relationships with teachers and parents, contributes to the dynamic nature of school community relationships (Price, 2015; Sun & Ni, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Cultural views need to be considered when professionals respond to student needs and work in partnership with communities (Lawrence, 2014; Center on School Turnaround, 2018).

Research addresses the need for charter school leaders to have a praxis to improve how they hire teachers that match the needs of their students (Khalil & Brown, 2015; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Certain strategies that could reduce charter schoolteacher turnover include establishing higher salaries for teachers, posting effective job descriptions, and maintaining a school culture that is positive (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Charter school principals must be alert to teacher behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes before hiring, then infuse into these aspects into professional development activities and teacher evaluations since they contribute to student achievement (Goodman et al., 2017; Price, 2015; Sun & Ni, 2015). About 25% of charter school teachers quit in their first year, and it is recommended charter school principals be alert to signs of burnout or fatigue (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Teng,

2018). Staff morale has a tremendous effect on success, and it is useful when staff are appreciated and valued (Montague, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rose & Stein, 2014; Teng, 2018).

Principals demonstrate social justice leadership when they speak up about issues of gender, class, race, disability, and marginalizing conditions in relation to their own leadership practices, advocacy, and vision. It is recommended that principals have dialogues with others about advocating for social justice in schools as resources are allocated, reminding policymakers of the leadership qualities that are needed in rural and urban communities to promote equitable and just education (Khalil & Brown, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2016). There is a model for social justice embracing inclusion and a leadership framework for social justice consisting of communication skills that address urban teaching, cultural competency, and commitment to serve the community and students (Khalil & Brown, 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Charter school administrators serve in underperforming schools by creating a continuum of relationships, school support, transformative involvement, and funds of knowledge. A charter school principal may be assigned a mentor upon taking over at an underperforming school; a principal may also hire a curriculum facilitator (Bukoski et al., 2015; Montague, 2017).

Charter principals are successful in establishing strong relationships with parents, thereby increasing the parental involvement that supports student achievement (Jeynes, 2012; Riley, 2000). Charter school principals use marketing and research-based strategies and focus on families as consumers to recruit families (Fox, 2016; Villavicencio, 2016). Charter school principals report spending small amounts of time on parental involvement, indicating that charter schools' larger amounts of parental involvement may not be the sole responsibility of the principals (Beck et al., 2014; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Dauber, 2013;

Davis, 2013). Educational scholars have not been able to provide schools guidance on whether parental involvement programs should be initiated since social science research does not offer the same evidence of effectiveness (Auerbach, 2009; Jeynes, 2012). While some student retention studies comparing charter schools and traditional schools have been done, more studies comparing ineffective charter schools to effective charter schools are necessary (Bukoski et al., 2015; Glenn, 2011; Montague, 2017; Rose & Stein, 2014; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Absent from the research is a discussion of the charter school principal's role retaining students of color.

Conclusion

This literature review of charter schools discussed the history of charter schools, the social contexts of the pros and cons of charter schools, segregation and charter schools, parental involvement in charter schools, and the charter school principal's role. The history of charter school growth in the United States is explained in the literature in various ways, with scholars focusing on policies regarding establishing and maintaining a charter school, charter schools' accountability when a standalone operation or an operation overseen by a management organization, autonomy in charter school accountability measures, demographic patterns for student enrollment and success, and leaders' creation of a shared vision that produces results (Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016).

The social contexts of the pros and cons of charter schools are reported in literature reviews regarding charter schools. Also provided in the literature reviews are statistics as to why charter schools close, which are used by opponents of charter school. Research findings indicate weak leadership by the principal and governing board members, scarce resources, and poor teaching as factors contributing to ineffective charter schools (Beck et al., 2014; Dauber, 2013; Montague, 2017). There is little support for the future success of charter schools, considering the

segregation of students based on race and socioeconomic status revealed in the current body of research. By examining principals' practices and perceptions, this study provides evidence that supports charter schools (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016).

Research on segregation and charter schools—specifically, charter schools' impact on segregation, causes of segregation in charter schools, charter school boards' role in segregation, and parental decisions' impact on segregation—confirms segregation exists in charter schools. Enrollment figures and the interrelationships among demographic patterns have been explored by comparing the enrollment of minority populations in charter schools with that of traditional public schools at the state, district, and local levels (Ni et al., 2015; Roch & Na, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). There is a need for further research on charter schools because of their impact on traditional public schools and urban communities (Brown & Makris, 2018; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017). Researchers argue market-based choice options contribute to charter school growth because of school segregation and mandated testing, the latter of which forces traditional schools to spend more time working to improve students' test scores (Bukoski et al., 2015; Glenn, 2011; Montague, 2017; Roda, 2017; Straus & Lemieux, 2016; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Over 920,000 students were on charter school waiting lists for the 2012–2013 school year across the United States, supporting the need for further study as to why parents are shifting from traditional schools to charter schools (Adzima, 2014; Ni et al., 2015; Whitmire, 2016).

There are several parental involvement models that pertain to charter schools' recruitment of families. It is necessary to explore whether parental involvement and engagement are the same for charter school parents and whether charter school mission statements encourage parents to be actively involved (Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). The educational research

community has found very little about actual principals' practices and perceptions when families are engaged (Jeynes, 2012; Stein, 2015). Research on the charter school principal's role discusses how an incentive pay model, teacher evaluations, teacher retention, use of personal and student time, and policy impact a charter school principal's practices by creating different environments across state lines (Kaimal & Jordan, 2016; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016). The charter school principal's role and approach needs further understanding on how parents are influenced (Lawrence, 2014; Price, 2015; Thomas & Lacey, 2016).

In conclusion, the causes of segregation in charter schools cited in the peer-reviewed research—such as, national and financial interests in the marketplace, false assumptions about marginalized students, the large number of African American students attending charter schools, the income gap, policy, and parents' reasons for deciding on charter schools—are limited in their ability to explain the influence charter school principals have in recruiting and retaining students of color in practice. Given that charter schools were intended to have more accountability than traditional schools, the increased segregation because of charter schools alarms some researchers. Charter schools are an understudied factor affecting segregation (Finley, 2015; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). An examination of current charter school research in relation to low-income students and segregation indicates the need for state policies addressing the segregation of low-income students (de Sousa, 2013; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). In particular, states need to enact policies addressing the accountability of charter schools enrolling the neediest students (de Sousa, 2013; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). This study's findings will be useful to policymakers and researchers as more is understood about charter school principals' recruitment and retention of students of color.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Chapters I and II presented the background for this study and discussed the research regarding charter schools as contributors to segregation (Brown & Makris, 2018; de Sousa, 2013; Kotok et al., 2017; Rotberg, 2014; Teng, 2018). It is unhealthy for students to attend racially segregated schools (Brown, 2004; Kotok et al., 2017; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016; Villavicencio, 2016; Williams, 2017; Young et al., 2015). The achievement gaps between Caucasians and minorities are prevalent and persistent(Brown, 2004; Finley, 2015; Kerstetter, 2016; Paul & Vaidya, 2014). As examined in the literature review, national reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) along with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been credited with creating a national movement supporting charter schools' growth through state policies enacted to allow for financial incentives for new charter schools, flexibility in management, and autonomy. Parental involvement in charter schools is important to the growth of these schools (Borup, 2016; Brown & Makris, 2018; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Lee, 2016; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015).

The gap in the research on the presence of segregation patterns leaves us to wonder about reasons for segregation beyond parental choice and policy, a further indication of why this qualitative study is needed (Carr, & Caskie, 2010; LaFleur, Rowe, & Leach, 2002). Segregation in charter schools refers to the isolation of students based on race, socioeconomic status, or language ability (Dauber, 2013; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, Wang, & Orfield, 2012; Kotok et al., 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2013). A better understanding of charter school growth and

segregation in charter schools is needed. This understanding can develop from listening to charter principals' views on recruiting and retaining students of color (Beck et al., 2014; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Carr & Caskie, 2010; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Dauber, 2013; Davis, 2013). The problem of segregation in charter schools and the lack of understanding of principals' views of recruitment and retention practices need to be further investigated for scholars to better understand charter school growth (Beck et al., 2014; Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Dauber, 2013; Davis, 2013).

The first section of this chapter presents the qualitative research question, the research design, the role of the researcher, a description of the participants and the setting, and the procedure for the interviews. The next section describes data collection, analysis of the data of participants lived experiences, trustworthiness, limitations, and conclusion. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of charter school principals to recruit and retain students of color (Carr, & Caskie, 2010; Finley, 2015; Frankenberg et al., 2012; Guy, 2011; Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016; Renzulli, 2006).

Research Question

What are charter school principals' experiences to recruit and retain students of color in the Midwest through admission policies or practices, retention strategies, and offered services?

Research Design

Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers study participant actions and behaviors. They try to make sense of a phenomenon's meaning. Qualitative research gives rise to a conceptual framework from the data instead of a preconceived one (Creswell, 2015). This qualitative case study was investigating what charter school principals do to recruit and retain students along with what

other services are offered. Qualitative case study needs to have a design which takes into

consideration ethics, trustworthiness, and credibility as the study occurs (Creswell, 2015;

Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh,

2000; Rebolj, 2013). It was important to consider how the study was grounded in ethics by

having a respect for the participants and their lived experiences, beneficence, and justice which

are clearly explained in Chapter (Lee, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000). Also,

self-reflection minimized possible ethical dilemmas such as recognizing multiple perspectives

exist. The researcher oversaw the management of data from start to finish and ensured the

participants understood the study by reviewing and signing the consent form, thereby minimizing

possible ethical dilemmas (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall &

Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000).

To best answer the research question, a qualitative case study was designed. This

approach allowed for charter school principals to be studied in their own cultural settings, in their

own words, and through their own voices (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Lee, 2016; Holland & Leander,

2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000; Rebolj, 2013). The case study approach

allowed for an analysis of each participant's cultural perspective while deemphasizing personal

views (Lee, 2016; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000).. The

design allowed the researcher to be accountable to the field of study and to give back to

participants by sharing their voices (Creswell, 2015; Lee, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

Trustworthiness was incorporated into the design in several ways: intentionally recalling

procedures for triangulation, searching for alternative explanations and discrepant findings,

soliciting feedback from participants, conducting member checks, and collecting rich narrative

data (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016;

McHugh, 2000). Credibility was established by taking into consideration how each question asked of participants might impact the study design (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lee, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000). This was a complex process but was needed to minimize threats to objectivity and generalizability (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000). This approach guided the techniques and methods used to conduct the study (Lee, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Consideration of how to incorporate the principals' voices into the study was critical in balancing the purpose of the study with the study design (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). Furthermore, the study design took into account how the virtual setting for interviews was accessed and how the participants' sensitivities aligned with the trustworthiness and goodness of the study (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000).

The research design then evolved to include deeper personal reflection on the existing literature: for example, that Hispanic, Black, and White children attend charter schools where students of their racial groups are the majority and that students attending charter schools with high levels of poverty have been found to have test scores that are better than those of students enrolled in traditional schools in the local district (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015). Research also found charter schools contribute to expanded parental choice. Selection differs between poor and rich areas, and charter school enrollment for Black students is a function of state policies and district segregation (Guy, 2011; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; McHugh, 2000; Renzulli, 2006). There is evidence that parental engagement and student achievement are impacted by the type of

leadership culture that the charter school principal creates in the building (Fox, 2016; Guy, 2011; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000).

The research design was chosen to shed light on why parents choose certain schools. The specific reasons for parents' selection of charter schools were considered (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000; Renzulli, 2006). Some scholars have referred to charter schools as laboratories and have indicated more qualitative research needs to be focused on promoting innovative student engagement practices in the educational system (Fox, 2016; Guy, 2011; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Little, 2007; McHugh, 2000). What is missing in the research are studies examining charter school principals' perspectives and practices regarding student engagement, like admission policies and recruiting practices, retention strategies, offered services, and the perceptions of administrators (Fox, 2016; Guy, 2011; Little, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). This research design was intentionally created with flexibility so that during the study, insights that appeared could be addressed in real time. The less structured approach allowed the researcher to avoid forms of bias such as tunnel vision (Creswell, 2015; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000). This qualitative study contributes to researchers' understanding of charter schools' recruitment and retention of students of color (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Creswell, 2015). The research design incorporated strategies to make sure the stories in the study were member-checked, thereby avoiding problems that can impair findings and hinder the cultural knowledge contributions of the study (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000).

Phenomenological Methods

This study design drew on phenomenological research methods (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). Phenomenology requires discussing phenomenology as philosophy. Phenomenology focuses on the sum of individuals' personal experiences (Creswell, 2017; Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). A phenomenological researcher has a personal interest in the topic under study, even as they recognize that a lived experience can never be fully understood (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). The researcher sought to understand through the lived experiences of principals leading students of color in charter schools. The phenomenological researcher must become more familiar with charter school principals' experiences in order to understand the phenomenon. Understanding how charter school principals are recruiting and retaining students of color in their schools could only be done by gaining insight into the principals' lived experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). Phenomenological research cannot have a predetermined set of procedures but must be guided by the participants, allowing the research to evolve over time (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). Phenomenological methods focus less on the factual status of events and more on the events' essence: in this case, the charter school principals' lived experiences recruiting and retaining students of color (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). For this reason, the researcher came to understand the lived experiences of each of the study's participants (van Manen, 1990). This study is not an analysis or explanation of those experiences but rather an experience for the researcher to uncover what exists.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic, the art and science of interpretation, phenomenology requires reflective interpretation of text to gain meaningful understanding and is not a method (Fuster Guillen,

2019). van Manen (1990) defines hermeneutic phenomenology as the study of persons as human science and the main objective is human understanding of what people do and why (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). In this approach the researcher looks to life's experiences to understand the experiences as lived to find meaning between those experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). The research involved interviewing charter school principals to understand what they say they do and why they do it (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). This study focused on understanding the lived experiences of charter school principals as they lead students of color.

The hermeneutic circle of understanding began with the researcher's understanding of her personal experience with charter schools. Next was the literature review, which further guided the researcher and informed her understanding of the phenomenon. Data were collected from interviews, personal journaling, and public websites and analyzed through a hermeneutic phenomenological method.

This study was phenomenological and hermeneutic in nature because the interpretation centered on data collected from six charter school principals in the Midwest. This approach helped the researcher to design the process for acquiring, collecting, and interpreting data, as well as reflecting on and contributing to the phenomenon of recruiting and retaining students of color. As a charter school supporter, the researcher knew her bias would be intrinsic. The researcher would need to remember her preconceived notions about charter school principals as she developed the procedure for the study. Rather than bracketing her own perspectives, her lived experiences were used to contribute to the data collection and analysis processes.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in this qualitative study listened to the experiences of individuals participating in the study and looked for alternative ways to make sense of data that would help elucidate how charter school principals retain students of color (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000; van Manen, 2017). In conducting the study, the researcher spent a considerable amount of time understanding how best to serve as the instrument in this qualitative study. The role of reflection in research partnerships, issues that may arise in relationships, and these issues' effects upon the study were contemplated during the design (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000). Putting the researcher in the place of each participant and learning from the participant's perception guided the researcher's ethical and appropriate relationship with each person (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000; van Manen, 2017). The anticipated concerns of the participants were addressed in the design by identifying in writing how participants may react to the study and the interview question. The researcher also engaged in careful written personal reflection on the research relationships, considering topics such as strategies for establishing relationships with the participants, the participants' views of the researcher, and the implicit understandings the participants may have about the study. The researcher also examined her relationship with herself as the research instrument (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000; van Manen, 2017).

The researcher's beliefs about parents having choice options when it comes to their own children and public education initiated this inquiry. Principals are key to successful charter schools, which is why it is important to understand the experiences of charter school principals to keep parents meaningfully engaged with their charter school and their children. All children must

have access to a high-quality education, and it is the researcher's aim to bring a voice to those underrepresented in educational research in charter schools. In this study, this person is the charter school principal. The social implications of favorably exploring the charter school movement were considered when examining the data in order to minimize bias when listening to the principals' stories. Institutional Review Board approval was sought once the National Institute of Health certification had been completed and granted (see Appendix A).

Strategies the researcher used to maintain her role as the research instrument consisted of weekly reflective sessions, journaling, and personal accountability goals (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; van Manen, 2017). The researcher's weekly sessions and review of research supported the need to protect participants' physical and emotional health during the study. Specific strategies like intentionally removing herself from the study and engaging in personal hobbies on a weekly basis helped the researcher to avoid becoming overwhelmed emotionally by the study. The researcher realized that it was important to confront her own understandings and determine whether new ideas bring new information that can be incorporated into her own practice (Creswell, 2015; Lee, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; van Manen, 2017). The historical significance of segregation is not an easy subject for discussion for a person of color who is a researcher; however, communicating through the research findings limits known biases. In this study, the researcher sought to listen and understand the experiences of charter school principals when retaining students of color.

The researcher recognized the importance of accessing participants and sites that yield rich data, establishing trust so that the study can be carried out ethically, and obtaining quality data that is credible (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000). As the researcher constructed her role, she took into consideration her

familiarity with the locations and her existing relationships. Determining the sample size was a complex process, and its relationship to the purpose of the study needed to be clear while still adhering to a flexible designed approach (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). Having a well-developed plan for sampling along with a concept map helped the researcher develop methods for data collection. The researcher's role was to be an objective instrument, recognizing the instrument is part of the study (Holland & Leander, 2004; Kotok et al., 2017; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rotberg, 2014).

Participants and Setting

Research suggest finding sites or individuals rich with data (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Purposeful sampling strategies were used to identify potential participants who had the experience and depth of understanding of the topic under study and who could provide the needed details to answer the research question in the study (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). Six K–12 charter school principals from the Midwest were targeted using a snowball sampling approach. The inclusion criteria were that each participant had to be the principal of a charter school located in Midwestern United States with at least a 50% minority student population, and each participant had to have been in that role for at least one year.

Recruitment of participants started with a snowball sampling approach. Acquaintances were contacted by phone and asked for assistance in identifying charter school principals who met the inclusion criteria. No social media, internet advertising, or fliers were used to recruit participants. Individual principals were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study. Participants were asked to voluntarily participate and sign an informed consent form stressing that the study would not have an influence, good or bad, on their present or future status as a

charter school principal or employee of a charter organization (see Appendix B). The introductory email explained the study (see Appendix C). Each person was asked to respond to the email with contact information if they were interested in participating in an interview. They had the opportunity to refuse to participate at that point by simply not responding. The participants who took part in this study participated between December 2020 and March 2021.

Participants could withdraw their consent at any time, and this was communicated as well. Some of the questions may have resulted in participants feeling uncomfortable or upset; as such, participants were free to decline to answer any questions they did not wish to answer or end their participation at any time. No one declined to answer questions or requested to end the interview.

Six principals of charter schools, each of whom had been employed for more than one year in that role, were selected for participation. The participants were volunteers and did not receive remuneration. Selected participants were asked via email how long they had been in their current positions. Each charter school principal was required to lead a school that was at least 50% students of color (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000). Once an email was received from a charter school principal indicating their willingness to participate, the researcher gathered demographic data using state school report cards. If the criteria were met, an email was sent and the informed consent form was provided (see Appendix B). The names of the participants and charter schools in this study are not disclosed and all met criteria. Pseudonyms were created for the participants and their charter schools.

Participants were informed that the interviews would be about their leadership in recruiting and retaining students and parental involvement (Beck et al., 2014; Carpenter & Peak,

2013; Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Dauber, 2013; Davis, 2013). One male and five female participants were interviewed. The study had the potential to interfere with participants' normal routines by requiring them to complete additional activities (i.e., interviews) during the day. The total time for each interview was about 30 to 60 minutes.

The participant sites were located in three states and four urban areas. The participant sites were described by the principals, as well as on the schools' websites and state report cards. One single standalone state-authorized charter school and five district-authorized charter schools were involved in this study. One charter school had a student population of 347 students in grades K–6. The racial makeup of the school was 99% African American and a 91% retention rate. The second charter school served 110 students in grades 9–12 and an 85% retention rate. The racial makeup of this school was 100% African American and the school was located in a predominately African American community. The third charter school had a population of 597 students in grades K–8. The racial makeup of the school was 93% African American and a 48% retention rate. The fourth charter school had a student population of 270 students in grades K–6 and a 84% retention rate. The racial makeup of the school was 69% African American, 21% White, and 10% other. The fifth school had a population of 459 students in grades 9–12 and a 92% retention rate. The racial makeup of the school was 99% African American. The sixth charter school had a population of 137 students in grades 9–12 and a 90% retention rate. The racial makeup of the school was 65% African American and 31% Hispanic. The students all received free or reduced-cost lunch.

Data Collection

In designing the qualitative research data collection procedure for this study, the researcher sought to understand the personal goals that motivated the study. An examination of

the goals showed the study was worthwhile and justified. It was also imperative to know the

motivations for the study and to keep the research from becoming too personal (Holland &

Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000; van Manen, 2017).

The practical goal of the study was to accomplish answering the research question by asking

direct questions (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh,

2000).

The researcher was the primary data collection instrument (Johnson & Christensen, 2008;

Marshall & Rossman, 2016; van Manen, 2017). The researcher had to consider ethical issues in

data collection when designing the study; this involved gathering school information to digest

prior to interviews and thereby reducing personal value judgements. Details on how data

collection decisions were made during the study and what actions were taken were noted by the

researcher in an organized manner to facilitate reflection, evaluation, and interpretation (Holland

& Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McHugh, 2000; van

Manen, 2017).

Travel considerations, access to sites, funds, political problems, the impact of negative

findings on participants, and the amount of time for data collection had to be thoroughly

examined (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016;

McHugh, 2000). The researcher considered the best approach to gathering six study participants

from the Midwest and collecting data virtually. Potential funding and political problems resulting

from negative findings were contemplated. This is why the study's data collection procedure was

focused on the positive responses received from participants.

Avoiding slang or jargon that may influence a participant's view of the researcher as

instrument also had to be considered (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Negotiating

time previously identified in research as a challenge with the charter school principals posed a challenge to data collection since COVID-19 has interrupted the typical school calendar and mode of learning (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Flexibility was intentionally built into the design of the study to reduce challenges such as scheduling changes, new health developments, and school business that took precedence (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000).

This study was designed to investigate individual charter school principals' experiences rather than create a neat narrative based on their responses (Creswell, 2015; Fox, 2016; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000; van Manen, 1990). Talking with charter school principals is critical to understanding charter school growth since the principals are the ones who determine the adequacy and distribution of resources (Auerbach, 2009; Stein, 2015; Stetson, 2013; Wang, 2016; West et al., 2017). According to van Manen (1990), the purpose of interviews in hermeneutic phenomenology is twofold. First, interviews are a means to explore and gather lived experiences to develop a deep rich understanding of the phenomenon (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). Next, interviews serve as a vehicle for conversing with a human participant about the phenomenon in question while paying close attention to avoid digressing from the discussion of the phenomenon (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990).

Interviews are used by phenomenological researchers to search participants' memories and uncover the meanings of the essence of the lived experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). A deeper meaning based on a lived experience is sought while interviewing. The interview portion of the study involved actively listening to individual experiences related to being a charter school principal and then understanding their experiences and see the essence of each lived experience (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990).

The personal data collection plan began with a detailed timeline of how data were to be collected, secured, and transcribed. This plan consisted of organizing sample selection data, identifying data management tools, and creating a researcher time management schedule (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Methods for recording data consisted of taking researcher journal notes weekly, storing educational research data, and obtaining and securing proper consent forms. The journal included entries based on personal reflections to keep a record of insights. van Manen (1990) sees this type of journaling about human experience as a means of providing reflective accounts. The researcher's journal entries were used throughout the study and helped to capture the researcher's reflections on the principals' experiences after the interviews. Understanding the cultural context of the charter school principals who were participating in the interviews was important for the researcher.

Data collected from the qualitative interviews were kept confidential by assigning each participant a unique identifying number (e.g., CSP1, CSP2, CSP3; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). All the interviews were transcribed and coded to a master list. The researcher recorded notes on an encrypted, password-protected laptop. The researcher did not make any copies of the notes, and all the study-related files and materials were secured in a locked safe in the researcher's home with the key kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

Charter school principals were purposefully sampled to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of charter school growth (Creswell, 2015; Guy, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In preparation for the individual interviews, the researcher reviewed documents about each school. The researcher examined each charter school's state report card and school websites,

which provided detailed achievement data, demographics, dropout rates, free and reduced-cost lunch data, and graduation rates to learn more about the school.

Prior to the interviews, the collected data were reviewed again by the researcher to identify additional topics to listen for during the interviews. The researcher prepared for the interviews by ensuring an information-rich profile of each school's documents was available for reference during the interview, that the recording software and equipment were functional, and that the interviews were carried out in a professional and unbiased manner (Creswell, 2015; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). This study involved six individual interviews. Interviews were conducted over the internet using a web-based meeting software application. The voice recordings were clear, and video cameras were used.

The researcher wrote down relevant thoughts and insights during the interviews (Holland & Leander, 2004; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). The researcher identified categories and themes that appeared repeatedly in the interview data on this phenomenon. This approach made it possible to discover more about charter school principals' perceptions of student retention.

The settings for the interviews were relaxed and friendly. The researcher maintained a courteous and respectful demeanor, remained on task with questions, did not lead answers, and finished within the allotted amount of time (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The procedure for the interview consisted of conveying a set tone for the time together, explaining the interview process, planning for recording the interview, and reviewing the purpose of the study. The confidentiality of the participant's personal information was maintained by separating names from interview notes and recordings. Responses were not able to be linked to a certain participant. The interview transcripts were confidentially coded and not able to be traced back to

a specific participant, either. The confidentiality of participants and their charter schools was a priority.

In this study, the phenomenological data collected consisted of detailed interviews with charter school principals who have experienced the phenomenon, the researcher's self-reflections, and outside sources that shed light on the phenomenon. The researcher collected data from six charter school principals who were at schools largely populated by children of color. In this study, data were collected from interviews with the goal of gaining insight into the principals' personal experiences recruiting and retaining students of color. All interviews were conducted individually online.

Respectfully interacting with the participants to collect data provided opportunities for transparent conversations about the study. Since the interviews were recorded, a natural flow was able to develop between the researcher and the participant (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). Since the interviews were conducted virtually instead of in person, some of the social context was removed. This presented a challenge for the researcher in terms of being attentive to facial expressions (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000). The researcher used member-checking emails to validate the findings (see Appendices D and E). A final challenge was the negative impact the study may have on individual participants, which is why listening to the participants was critical (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Data Analysis

The case study data in this study consisted of six individual interviews with one guiding question per participant. The guiding interview question was designed to elicit descriptions of what recruitment, retention, and other services sound and look like, thereby allowing the

researcher to develop an understanding of the essence of each participant's experience as a charter school principal (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990). The researcher asked the interview question "What are you doing to recruit and retain students of color in your school?" to each participant and followed up with short and descriptive questions about the experience the participant described. A total of 72 questions were asked of the six participants, and each participant answered a different number of questions. The researcher video- and audio-recorded each interview. Interviews were transcribed electronically. Each interview lasted 30–60 minutes. Follow-up interviews were not needed.

The initial analysis involved examining data about the participants' charter schools that were available online (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Data analysis and reduction followed a rigorous systematic procedure that included transcribed interviews. Data analysis consisted of making sense of the data immediately after each interview was completed and not waiting for all interviews to be completed. van Manen (1990) offered a guide to reflection, noting that by reviewing a transcript immediately after an interview. Themes were identified while reviewing the data gathered to compare the approaches, challenges, strategies, and structures used by the charter school principals and that affect student retention (Creswell, 2015; Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000).

The advanced analysis of the initial data analysis consisted of integrating concepts to explain answers to the research question and merging data and themes to gain a greater understanding of the connections among different sources of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). The interpretation of data involved triangulating findings from the qualitative data about charter school principals' patterns. A phenomenologist shares findings

with detailed narratives that explore the patterns and themes of lived experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990, 2017). The synthesis of a phenomenological analysis involves reduction by writing about the phenomenon then reflecting about it in a journal. The analysis of interviews involved examining significant statements used to communicate the meaning of the phenomenon. Themes captured the structures of the lived experiences of charter school principals who recruit and retain students of color. The phenomenological analysis also involved textual and structural descriptions of how the principals experienced recruiting and retaining students of color, such as patterns in context (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990, 2017). The essence of an experience is a composite of themes and textural and structured descriptions (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990, 2017).

Journal analysis involved looking for significant statements about the phenomenon in the researcher's journal. The analysis of journal entries helped the researcher to reflect on, explore, assign meaning to, and come to understand the phenomenon. The researcher looked for journal entries that supported how the researcher reflected upon the participants' experiences. In addition to significant statements, the literature review and journal and web information were used to clarify themes found in participants' words. Themes were used to develop descriptions of the participants' lived experiences as they recruit and retain students of color.

van Manen's (1990) method for exploring a narrative is first, to have material that serves as a resource for developing a deep understanding of phenomenon; second, to ask the participant to share significant experiences in a detailed manner; and finally, to ask the participant to reflect on their experience. Interviewing is when a person has someone to listen to their story. The interview analysis consisted of identifying specific statements from transcripts specifically about

the participants' experiences as charter school principals recruiting and retaining students of color. The researcher considered whether the statements supported the understanding of the phenomenon and were descriptions of the experience (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990, 2017). A range of perspectives was seen, and the perspectives were not grouped in any way. Interviews, transcriptions, and journal entries provided data for the analysis of charter school principals' recruitment and retention of students of color. The researcher bracketed her own beliefs, views, and assumptions concerning charter school principals and this phenomenon.

Trustworthiness

Phenomenological researchers gain a heightened perspective by having a transformed consciousness (van Manen, 2017). The researcher needs to be reflectively aware and actively engage in reflection that is at the heart of research in phenomenology. It is a deep questioning of lived experiences that transforms consciousness. Deep questioning provided the researcher with reflexivity in considering the ongoing conversation while keeping the researcher in the moment of the lived experience. Phenomenology edifies personal insight to reflection and skill to act.

When considering research design threats, personal views and beliefs emerge as possible influences. The researcher engaged in self-reflection on personal experiences using journal entries from over time to compare experiences and perspectives. By examining the self and paying attention to behaviors that would influence her findings, the researcher struck a delicate balance that helped to rule out threats when listening to the participants' stories (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000).

An awareness of how the interviews of participants were conducted is important. The researcher avoided asking leading questions; instead, she asked only the identified question and

followed up with topic-clarifying questions for the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Since natural conversation occurred, it was important to take notes. Another area that is closely related to trustworthiness involves being as truthful as possible about what was heard and examining transcripts (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; McHugh, 2000).

The researcher had planned to build trustworthiness by not focusing on school variations or over-identifying with themes from narratives (Holland & Leander, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; McHugh, 2000). The researcher kept a journal and field notes. Keeping detailed, handwritten notes on the transcripts and then going back to discover emerging themes was done to build trustworthiness. Conducting member-checking helped, too (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Wang, 2016).

The qualitative case study design consisted of the purposeful sampling of six charter school principals, and the analysis of interview data was conducted using an interactive comparative method that focused on identifying regular patterns in the transcripts and the researcher's notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Rebolj, 2013). Utilizing this process, major themes appeared (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Wang, 2016). Participants' voices along with quotations addressing the themes are part of the research findings.

Researcher bias was examined with the goal of discovering the stories in relation to the research question (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). The selected interview question was carefully considered. Questions needed to be clear and asked in the same

manner each time. Different interpretations of the question were considered. It was critical to understand the variations in the experiences of the principals participating in the study.

Limitations

Limitations exist in all studies and were avoided as much as possible in this study. This study was limited to a small number of participants; as such, it does not present a complete picture of charter school principals beyond this point in time and context (Creswell, 2015; Little, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study was not directly concerned with policy. Rather, this study was about understanding a voice not represented in the national charter school research. The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of charter school principals to recruit and retain students of color. It was not possible to identify all potential risks to the participants via the research procedures, but the researcher took reasonable safeguards to minimize any known or potential risks. Participation in this study was voluntary and posed no known risks.

A limitation of the study is that some participants may have left out details or examples, assuming the researcher was familiar with particular verbiage (Creswell, 2015; Little, 2007). Due to limitations on travel and access to schools during the COVID-19 health crisis, other information such as a clear reading of body language was not available to the researcher. This may have affected the findings. Not being able to be present in a physical location with an interview subject hindered the building of trust in the researcher's relationship with each participant. The researcher limited the presence of personal and leading interpretations in the findings. An evaluation of the consistency of the asked question was conducted by considering how the question was asked to each participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

In conclusion, this study started with an inquiry into how charter school principals are recruiting and retaining students of color. The current body of research indicates segregation is on the rise in many U.S. charter schools. The researcher designed this study by reviewing the research trends and patterns. The research indicates parent choice is a driving factor in the creation of charter schools resulting in segregation. Having studied the research the researcher saw that little analysis and few findings exist regarding the role and impact of charter school principals in retaining students of color. Charter school principals are influential players in the success of charter schools, which is why this study's research method and procedure for the analysis of data were carefully chosen to answer the research question. All necessary precautions were taken to avoid any harm to participants. This qualitative case study of charter school principals contributes to scholars' understanding of the perceptions of charter school principals related to recruiting and retaining students of color.

Phenomenology views the social world and the way of understanding the social world through the prism of individuals' lived experiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). The research design of the study consisted of identifying the basis for the research, the type of research, the methodology, the data collection procedure, the findings, any researcher biases, and the practical applications of the findings and recommendations (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). The methods and data analysis procedure were carefully designed to answer the research question. The research question asked was in the middle of the research design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

By using qualitative data, the researcher was better positioned to understand and explain by listening to charter school principals' stories (Fuster Guillen, 2019; van Manen, 1990, 2017). Six interviews were conducted online with video and audio with one question asked of all

interviewed participants. Data collection notes and transcripts were stored electronically on encrypted computer files whose password was known only to the researcher. The data were organized, and different strategies were used initially to understand and interpret the data, such as coding the data to understand the principals' perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Data case studies, case summaries, and searches for alternative understandings of the data were also used. When writing down the findings, the researcher followed the plan to analyze the data by providing a rich description. Empirical evidence in this study sheds light on how principals' actions influence charter school schools' retention of students of color (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Chao et al., 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wang, 2016).

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Analysis of the Findings

  Explanation of the analysis methodology.

  The process used to analyze the responses to the question *"What are you doing to recruit and retain students of color in your school?"* was descriptive coding. The first cycle of coding involved finding codes within each response (Saldaña, 2016). The second cycle consisted of examining categories. Understanding to which category each comment pertained allowed for themes to begin to appear during the rereading of all the transcripts. This was an important aspect in beginning to analyze the data further. Upon reflection on the data, the researcher explored what each comment pertained to. The data was arranged by various configurations once the codes, categories, and themes were exported from an Excel spreadsheet into a Word document. The various displays of the data allowed for the researcher to analyze the data by frequency and to create a visual representation of various patterns as the themes in the data appeared. Once the themes had appeared by hand, the researcher aligned the transcripts again to confirm the themes. Five themes appeared from the data: recruitment outreach, retention communication, other services curriculum, leadership relationships, and school culture self-care.

  Summary of the participant group.

  Participants were six principals, each of whom had more than a year of experience leading a charter school with 50% or more students of color as defined in the various states' online public school information systems. The participants were from four urban areas in three

Midwest states. The charter schools varied in grade configurations, size, and years of experience as a principal. Names and school identities are omitted from this analysis, and each participant is referred to as a numbered charter school principal (CSP). This numbering does not reflect any particular order or the interview order of the participants. Every effort was made to conceal the schools and participants' identities in the reporting of the findings.

Themes related to the research question and participants' lived experiences.

Upon further examination of the transcript data, five themes appeared. The most popular theme is reported for each part of the research question. The first theme identified was recruitment outreach, with the two subthemes of community locations and purpose and design (Cetinkaya, 2016; Glenn, 2011). The second theme, retention communication, had the two subthemes of progress reporting to students and parents and expectations (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015). For the third theme, other services curriculum, the three sub themes of art, college and career readiness, and parent education were present (Holmes Erickson, 2017). The fourth theme, leadership relationships, had the three subthemes of families, staff, and students (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Finally, the fifth theme, school culture self-care, had the three subthemes of pre-pandemic self-care, pandemic self-care, and personal self-care (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Teng, 2018; Villavicencio, 2016). Figure 2 below reflects these themes.

Figure 2.
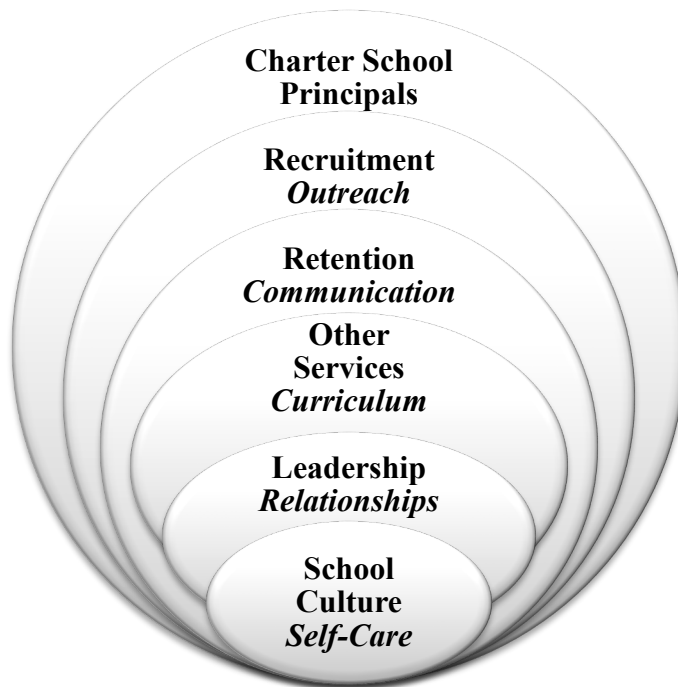
Recruitment outreach.

The six charter school principals gave several reasons why recruitment is critical to their schools and what they do to recruit. When listening to their lived experiences, the researcher found the theme of recruitment outreach appeared from their stories in the most pervasive and powerful way. The life stories of this study's participants demonstrate the need for support research on students of color. It was evident that charter school principals' recruitment outreach had two subthemes: community locations and purpose and design (Davis, 2013; Eckes, 2015; Glenn, 2011; Khalil & Brown, 2015; Villavicencio, 2013).

Retention communication.

The second theme to appear was retention communication, with the two subthemes of progress reporting to students and parents and the communication of charter school principals' expectations. As participants shared lived experiences related to what they do to retain students,

it became apparent that parents stay because of communication and more specifically, how the charter school principals provide progress reports to the students and parents (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Bickmore & Dowell, 2015).

Other services curriculum.

The third theme that appeared when listening to the lived experiences of the charter school principals was the other services offered to recruit and retain students of color. This theme, other services curriculum, had three subthemes: art, college and career readiness, and parent education (Davis, 2013; Holmes Erickson, 2017).

Leadership relationships.

Leadership relationships is the fourth theme that was seen. It was clear when listening to the stories of charter school principals' personal efforts to recruit and retain students of color that each had a personal investment and involvement in successful relationships. Each described individual actions and behaviors taken that related to this theme. More specifically, the principals described how their leadership relationships with families, staff, and students support them in fulfilling their recruitment and retention responsibilities as the leaders of their school communities (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014).

School culture self-care.

During the study participants' interviews, a surprising theme appeared regarding school culture, specifically self-care. Charter school principals described their school cultures while sharing how they manage recruiting and retaining students of color. As more questions were asked, it became clear that school culture could be described in terms of the pre-pandemic and pandemic self-care of staff, students, and parents. The principals described school culture by

discussing the environment, classroom, and school community for each group of constituents (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Villavicencio, 2016).

Discussion of Research Question

Research question.

Phenomenology must be pedagogical in nature, according to van Manen (1990). van Manen further stated that theory and research are meant to orient one towards pedagogy. In this study, the researcher kept a pedagogical focus by seeking out themes about how the charter school principals meet the needs of the students. The researcher sought themes appearing in conversations with participants and literature indicating that charter school principals have a role in recruiting and retaining students of color. Hence, the research question is "What are charter school principals experiences to recruit and retain students of color in the Midwest through admission policies or practices, retention strategies, and offered services?"

Recruitment outreach.

Community locations

The first major theme of recruitment outreach appeared with a subtheme of community locations. The principals described these locations. Charter School Principal 1 (CSP1) described actively recruiting in barber shops, churches, early childhood centers, apartment complexes, and restaurants within a certain radius. Billboards were used to recruit the Spanish-speaking populations. Another participant, Charter School Principal 2 (CSP2), described the use of yard signs, the school's partnership with housing complexes to post flyers, and the invitation to community partners to come and work with students that was then used as leverage during recruitment outreach with other potential families. The process used for partnership referrals was shared with centers like Head Start (Adzima, 2014; Almond, 2012; Fox, 2016; Williams, 2017).

This recruitment outreach subtheme also appeared when Charter School Principal 3 (CSP3) described how one community-based organization partnership had resulted in the founding of a pre-kindergarten program for free and reduced-cost lunch students at the charter school, providing the school with a location from which to recruit incoming students. CSP3 also shared how teacher committees voluntarily staff recruitment events and how they reach out to families in various ways to recruit students. Charter School Principal 4 (CSP4) emphasized how he had introduced different ideas into the community at different activities and made workshops available to families. These workshops were designed to cover a specific aspect of schooling a parent may want for their child (i.e., male mentorship). The use of local newspapers, school websites, and word of mouth was also noted. Charter School Principal 5 (CSP5) described recruitment outreach by explaining how parents are trained to recruit others in the community, how public housing complexes include a school recruitment pamphlet with rent statements since the school is nearby, how no money is spent on advertising for recruitment outreach, and how parents are invited to come observe the school. Charter School Principal 6 (CSP6) reported several recruitment outreach efforts, like community door hanger campaigns, marketing campaigns targeted at parents, media outreach, social media, and the strategic targeting of zip codes.

Purpose and design

This subtheme of recruitment outreach is purpose and design (Almond, 2012; Eckes, 2015; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). It was captured in the lived experience of CSP1, who described how recruitment is focused on the high-caliber charter school design and how the design intentionally aligns with the school's mission of college and career readiness (Almond, 2012; Eckes, 2015; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). The purpose and design are to create an

inclusive space in which students would become critical consumers of knowledge. The integral parts of the school's model to intentionally attract students of color are its grade configurations, a policy allowing siblings to attend, parental involvement in the process to recruit others, credit design, sports, and the rigorous curriculum. CSP2 described recruiting students of color by purpose and design as well, sharing how the school is focused on the whole child and describing the school's diversity goals and intentional hiring practices, such as having staff involved in hiring. Shared recruitment involves staff knowing who the school was designed for and that the school has an open but intentional enrollment process with students who live in zones closer to the school having higher chances of admission.

CSP3 showed how recruitment outreach involves buying into the school's mission to ensure the school is top-notch so families choose the school and are pleased. CSP3 reported the recruitment process as beginning with the self-recognition that one grew up as a white person being taught to be colorblind but not knowing or understanding that the implications of colorblindness are devastating for communities of color. Understanding the history of neighborhoods was explained as important to recruitment because it helps explain the school's location. Helping parents not give up out of frustration with other schools was described as important to effective recruitment. CSP4 shared how core values (i.e., team and family) are emphasized in recruitment. Transparency with families about the school, the school's management of the wait list, and word-of-mouth recruitment meetings all create a culture that is intentionally designed.

CSP5 shared how recruitment is a delegated responsibility. Staff members assume positions in which they partner with the administration to lay the foundation for outreach. These positions were designed as part of the hierarchy of the school because the school only hires

people who are meant to be there. This job-person fit is tested in the job interview when the candidate is given a problem of practice and asked to develop a solution. CSP6 indicated that the literature distributed to the community during recruitment highlights the purpose and design of the school, with the goal of helping people get to know each other and making sure students are going to be successful and productive citizens of this ever-expanding society.

Retention communication.

Progress reporting to students and parents

Charter school principals discussed at great length how they retain students of color. All reported high retention rates. The theme of retention communication surfaced from lived accounts of retaining students of color (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Rudo & Partridge, 2016). The first of two subthemes is progress reporting to students and parents (Cheng & Peterson, 2017; Rudo & Partridge, 2016 reference).. This can be seen in the lived experiences of all the participating charter school principals. CSP1 described how finding a volunteer Spanish translator helped to keep parents informed about student progress. The translator consistently told parents how their children were receiving an exceptional educational experience, reported to parents on school safety, and on job training programs offered on site for adults. CSP1 revealed that the parents love receiving progress reports. Progress reporting to students and parents was mentioned when CSP2 related how as principal, they pay close attention to families and build relationships with students and parents by communicating about grades. Progress reporting includes regular student check-ins on career pathways until the students reach twelfth grade. CSP2 stated, *"I always say the first at bat is a phone call. If that does not work, follow up with a secondary form text email parents were something, but our expectation is that they reach out to families every week."*

The retention communication theme was also heard when CSP3 conveyed how communication with parents is part of retaining students. Progress reporting was uncovered when CSP3 described continually telling parents the importance of students' investment in their schoolwork, the school's current graduation rate, dual-credit opportunities, and strategies for parents to help their students be successful. Communication opportunities to engage with individual parents to report student growth occurred via different student activities, classes for parents, informational sessions, and report card pick-up. CSP4 spoke to the theme of retention communication when describing how school progress is shared with students and parents to retain them. This participant described progress reporting as a powerful tool when it occurs during town halls, parent trainings, family movie nights, and especially assemblies, like when students read aloud poems for parents. Parents also engage in their students' progress meeting learning outcomes by attending classroom learning demonstrations led by their students. These demonstrations were designed on purpose to retain students of color (Fox, 2016; Rudo & Partridge, 2016; Teng, 2018).

For CSP5, the communication of individual student progress involved showcasing student work from classroom observations in a weekly newsletter that is shared daily when parents pick up their children. CSP6 shared how surveys are used as part of the school process to involve parents by addressing barriers. CSP6 reported helping parents at parent–teacher conferences to be patient with student learning, making sure parents know that each student has an individualized plan, ensuring the parents understand academic growth, and describing the social and emotional support for parents offered on site by external partners.

Expectations

Retention communication's second subtheme of expectations was revealed when CSP1 disclosed how personal expectations are communicated to retain students (Fox,2016; Rudo & Partridge, 2016; West et al., 2017). The principal establishes a no-nonsense culture by setting expectations, stating expectations, restating the expectations if students are not living up to them, and resetting expectations as needed all while holding true to the school's mission. CSP2 shared how clear written communication and parents' personally held high expectations for students' college readiness are key to retention. CSP3 discussed how high expectations are consistently being communicated because the charter school is a place where a top-notch education is incredibly important and needed to retain families. This participant also stated that it takes a village to raise a child, and all benefit when all are invested so failure is not an option.

CSP4 discussed how retention is an organic process because parents expect to stay at the school. They added that the expectation for students to graduate is communicated by making sure the teachers are reaching out to families at least once per week. CSP5 discussed retaining students of color by personally being visible in the building to listen, by prioritizing regular communication, by making sure students know they have access to staff and administrators, and by working to meet students' needs in firm and respectful ways. CSP6 told of how personal retention expectations are embedded into the culture of high student expectations. The school emphasizes the expectation for each student to be a scholar, coaches students to speak in front of people, and focuses not on standardized tests but on helping students understand why tests exist in the real world.

Other services curriculum.

Arts

Participants were asked about the other services their schools provide or offer to recruit and retain students of color. This third theme was identified as other services curriculum, which has three subthemes (Holmes Erickson, 2017; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; West et al., 2017). Arts is the first. This subtheme surfaced when CSP1 described the other services curriculum like visual arts and the ways the school helps students to see their artistic talents and appreciate poetry. CSP2 described dance classes and how other doors have opened because of the arts, like opportunities for the students to learn to play instruments. CSP3 described how rap music and opportunities to learn how to produce music are successful in drawing in interested students and retaining them. CSP4 described audio-video production studios. CSP5 described how lesson plans incorporate other services that are of cultural interest to the students such as painting, drawing, and various forms of artistic expression. CSP6 shared how the science curriculum is integrated with the arts.

College and career readiness

Investigating other services offered to recruit and retain students of color led to the second other services curriculum subtheme of college and career readiness (Anderson & Holder 2012; Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Teng, 2018). This subtheme was captured as the principals spoke about their schools, classes, and student readiness skills. CSP1 described how the school field trips to colleges with parents and students are popular and how each day double math lessons are provided along with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses that attract many parents. CSP2 shared how the staff reinforces the mission of the school and how students can test out of classes because the school does not want to hold back anyone who is ready to

move on. This participant further added that the emphasis on college and career readiness means that each class is intentionally designed to include debating, student facilitation skills, and all modalities of learning, all of which draw students to the school. CSP3 talked about how the school curriculum is designed to celebrate student attendance, monitor freshmen's progress on a biweekly basis, and provide eleventh-graders with a mandatory college and career readiness course that consists of problem-based instruction requiring students to think on an abstract level.

The other services curriculum theme's subtheme of college and career readiness was identified when CSP4 disclosed how the curriculum prioritizes multiple pathways of scholarly learning because of the importance of raising a generation of people to understand the implications of race and class. Offerings in the curriculum include digital marketing, coding, and robotics. CSP5 discussed how dual enrollment and the introduction to collegiate programs in health and pharmacy is of interest to families. The other services curriculum theme's subtheme of college and career readiness was also supported when CSP5 said that ensuring students internalize and master standards is a priority; students also must have a minimum number of college applications submitted, attend seminars, and go on college campus visits. CSP6 revealed how the school requires students to have five-year plans for after high school, attend a college speaker series, explore opportunities for internships in their fields of interest, and seek assistance with applying for scholarships, further supporting this subtheme. Also discussed was how the curriculum shows history from different points of view, requiring the students to be critical and analyze ideas. All of these services are highlighted when recruiting potential students.

Parent education

The third and final subtheme of the other services curriculum theme is parent education (Paul & Vaidya, 2014; Rudo & Partridge, 2016; West et al., 2017). CSP1 described how the

school creates a family atmosphere through bonding events and by ensuring families know what is in the taught curriculum. CSP2 shared how parents come back to visit because of the parent classes offered at the school. CSP3 described how parents are offered cooking classes and parent clubs. CSP4 discussed how family education consists of workshops on college expenses and financial assistance. CSP5 discussed how the school offers parents life skill classes on a regular schedule aligned to the curriculum so parents understand social and emotional well-being. CSP6 disclosed how extracurricular activities that are open to students' whole families provide time for parents to learn more about the curriculum.

Leadership relationships.

Leadership relationships with families

Leadership relationships were mentioned repeatedly during the interviews . This fourth theme, leadership relationships, was recognized by families, staff, and students (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Auerbach, 2009; Brown & Makris, 2018; Kahlenberg, 2013). CSP1 described how as principal, they stress to families that they do not have to settle for a "less-than" education for their children and consider it an honor to serve families. CSP2 described the experience of having an open-door policy with families, giving insight to what this leadership relationship looks like in action. CSP3 shared how families have a personal phone number to call and parents know they can talk to someone at school. For CSP4, this theme of leadership relationships with families was captured in the principal's statement that they know of siblings who are yet to attend and prioritize family contact. Leadership relationships were also recognized when it was shared that many parents volunteer, that parents want their students to stay until graduation, and that parents want to come back to the school even after their students leave to remain connected to the school community.

CSP5 described experiences illustrating leadership relationships with families using words like by "purposeful" and "communicator." CSP5 leads a school committee with parents to find out about what can be done for parents on a monthly basis to recruit and retain students of color. Participant CSP6 outlined leadership relationship experiences that occur while recruiting families, listening to a parent's concerns, and focusing on creating an excellent school by living up to the partnership with families as the charter school principal.

Leadership relationships with staff

Another subtheme that appeared in the lived experiences of recruiting and retaining students of color was leadership relationships with staff (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Roda & Stuart Wells, 2013). CSP1 recognizes staff as leaders, maintains personal connections with them, and hosts a popcorn day to intentionally connect with the staff about their students. School leaders' relationships with staff were captured when it was shared how staff interview questions are designed to build rapport, how weekly leadership meetings support staff talking to one another, why end-of-month growth meetings create momentum for teamwork, and how root cause analysis meetings eliminate barriers.

CSP2 shared that in the school community, the relationship with staff to recruit and retain students of color is supported with modeling cultural pedagogy. Further illustrated was how governance of change management is in place to monitor progress and how student learning is supported by outstanding teaching in the classroom. CSP3 shared how staff are supported in helping many parents become more knowledgeable about school choices, given resources to know how to relate, and provided with leadership staff development. CSP4 recognized the role of the schoolteachers is to teach students and be prepared for the major events in their lives despite ongoing incidents of social and racial injustice. Leadership relationships with staff were

also heard in the description of how culturally relevant teaching and strategies are put in front of the team and stressed at meetings, and the staff do not seek to obscure those conversations.

CSP5 shared how staff are expected to avoid sending weekend emails or making calls after a certain time on Friday. CSP5 also disclosed how students stay because of the teachers and the teachers stay because of the rewards, graduate tuition assistance, accolades, coaching on best practices, and the principal's willingness to do the work alongside them as a fearless leader. CSP6 described retaining students of color as possible because of the school's decision to hire and retain highly qualified staff. By expecting consistency from the staff, the school has seen low turnover. CSP6 shared that teachers opt to do extra and create a healthy environment. Leadership relationships were further seen in a principal's account of how they make sure staff are equipped with the resources that they need and that book knowledge is not enough. This is why reflective questions about school culture like where the school is at, where the school is going, and what future professional development is needed individually and collectively are asked.

Leadership relationships with students

CSP1's leadership relationship with students was heard in the description of how students love to stay at school because they started there, like the intimate setting that has a lot of heart and soul, feel the love, and are treated like they are part of a family. CSP1 shared that as a principal, they want the students to be whatever they desire to be, whether this involves going to medical school, being a stay-at-home parent, working as a mechanic, or starting their own business, and that the education the students receive should leave them prepared (Perez-Felkner, 2015; Santamaría, 2014). CSP2's leadership relationship with students was detected when the principal described how it is typical to go beyond the call of duty to create a bond with a lot of love and to make sure the students are comfortable by taking care of each student as if they were

family. CSP3's leadership relationship with students was uncovered when the principal shared how in the school community, referral data are used to guide CSP3-led activities like student raffles, incentive-based activities, parades, and scholarship distribution. CSP3 pulls out the red carpet as an incentive because they want students to feel what it is like to be on the red carpet. CSP4 corroborated this point by describing how students are encouraged to sit together, talk, and apologize to classmates so they know how to relate to one another and can find ways to restore trust.

CSP5's leadership relationship with students was captured when the principal described how recruitment and retention involve investing in students by no suspensions. The participant stated the school "*will embrace the student so no old school approach to discipline.*" Also discussed was how attention to student data and adjustments to the curriculum help students gain admission to college. CSP6's leadership relationships with students were noted when the principal shared how it is important to be visible in the school community, to advocate for students in legislation, and to be aware of racist practices in the city so as to work more effectively with students. Also, it was shared how getting to know the students walking through the door is at the core of a partnership between home and school. This participant elaborated by saying that administrators need to come equipped if they wish to be successful with black and brown students. For example, administrators need to make sure the required curriculum unit plans include culturally responsive strategies such as having Black authors embedded in the content.

School culture self-care.

Pre-Pandemic

As the study participants described what they do to recruit and retain students of color, the fifth theme of school culture self-care appeared (Price, 2015; Rudo & Partridge, 2016). School culture was mentioned as charter school principals shared their experiences recruiting and retaining students of color. It became clear upon examining the transcripts that school culture could be described in two subthemes: pre-pandemic and pandemic self-care of staff, students, and parents. The lived experiences with school culture were captured in remarks about the environment, classroom, and the school community for each group of stakeholders.

CSP1 described the pre-pandemic culture of the school as a place where staff asked how others were taking care of themselves, always gave credit to the team, maintained a work-life balance, and recognized they did not have to be everything to everybody. The school culture in the classroom was described as one in which a social and emotional learning teacher taught self-care. Teachers who were not a fit for the school were supported in making the decision to leave, further showing how the school community had a climate and culture of self-care.

CSP2 gave pre-pandemic examples of how teachers in their school individually acknowledged the need for self-care. Classroom expectations to reach out to families existed; the teachers did not just talk about academics but also discussed self-care with parents. Teachers let parents in the carpool line know about the availability of counselors for parents. CSP3 gave examples of how teachers individually acknowledged self-care by inviting community health partners to classroom parent-teacher organization (PTO) meetings. CSP3 told of how teachers discussed self-care with parents who are in the building volunteering. School community town

halls were described as another place where information about services was shared with parents, further illuminating the culture of the school.

The description of the pre-pandemic school culture by CSP4 focused on the individual environment. Students were told that they are part of a family and that one link missing changes the climate and culture. Self-care techniques like focusing on breathing and reflecting (i.e., 30 minutes in the morning) were mentioned. Teachers taught students to be scholars of self-care to reinforce attendance described the school culture of self-care pre-pandemic. CSP5 described the school culture as an intimate setting for individual care, the classroom as a traditional avenue for teaching school values, and the school community as an environment in which principal online video bedtime read a louds supported self-care. CSP6 shared how school culture self-care was seen in individual 15-minute meditation drills, classroom peace circles, and school community mentoring.

Pandemic

The school culture self-care pandemic subtheme was revealed when the principals described how they are managing recruiting and retaining students of color during the pandemic. This subtheme identified in the school culture has impacted the self-care of staff, students, and parents in the individual environment, classroom, and school community. CSP1 described how the individual staff environment now provides for self-care days to manage work-life balance. CSP1 constantly focuses on positive news so teachers will not feel defeated looking at the screen all day, gives teachers a free period and teaches for them, provides a weekly self-care message, talks about self-care in all meetings, encourages staff to like their work so they bring their best selves to work every day, reminds them to take care of themselves, emphasizes that it is all hands on deck daily, serves as a lifeline mentor to teachers, and has monthly celebrations and monthly

Zoom events with breakout rooms featuring games. The Zoom events are a virtual escape from work for the staff; CSP1 wants them to take a break.

CSP1 described how the classroom is changing from a constructive environment to an aspirational environment. The principal makes sure each student is assigned a mentor and has quiet time at beginning of the classes, sees joy inside of classrooms with smiles on people's faces because teachers are eager to see the students, and gives positive points for online attendance. The pandemic has influenced school culture self-care; for instance, the strategic plan has changed to include mental health supports, to allow people to talk with the principal on the spot, and to encourage the continued building of relationships online. CSP1 described how this pandemic has shed light on disparities of means for parents in the school community, and therefore the principal makes sure to include parents in the process by surveying them and attending virtual town halls to learn about the other challenges that exist but that are not known. This participant also started a parent committee with a teacher serving as a parent liaison to assist with parent education.

CSP2 described the pandemic's impact on school culture self-care by sharing how the individual environment now is such that all staff are more engaged in professional development than before, incentives for staff happen every Friday with celebrations, and staff are told what to do if experiencing emotional distress. CSP2 described themselves as a stronger advocate for work-life balance and for making sure staff know how to balance. The classroom impact of this school culture self-care theme was shown when CSP2 expressed how all teachers recognize they are growing together in distance learning, that they are working as a team to make sure that they can manage through the pandemic, and that attention is given to new needs that arise. The pandemic's impact on the school culture in the school community was illustrated with statements

about how important it is now to nurture remote relationships, be there for families, and reach out to families with self-care mental health tips.

CSP3 discussed how the pandemic has influenced school culture self-care for individuals by leading to increased individual environment safety protocols and transportation creativity. CSP3 gave a typical example of how school culture has been impacted by describing one-to-one technology with hotspots that support individual students taking ownership of their self-care. CSP3 talked about how a cautionary approach to self-care has been taken. Teachers are not asked to do too much, new structures have been put in place, there are one-on-one and weekly meetings with leadership, there are growth meetings to allow for adjustments, and there is a larger push for all to be in this together. It was also disclosed that the school culture involves constantly designing solutions for retaining students of color in the classroom during the pandemic. Some ideas have not worked, so CSP3 has had to go back and redesign that component, pressure-test it, obtain feedback from people, and then roll it out. There have been many major redesigns since March 2020. In the school community, the pandemic school culture self-care theme manifests as an increased focus on basic hunger and some basic social emotional needs rather than academic needs.

CSP4 described how school culture self-care has been influenced by the pandemic. For example, "Teacher of the Week" recognition was started based on core values to support individual morale. The principal emphasizes to staff that they are all treading water together because this is new to all of them and that everyone has greater individual accountability to follow up on expectations to reach out to families each week with self-care ideas. Self-care was also seen when CSP4 shared that they had started hosting a tea session for open discussions with individuals. The pandemic's impact on the classroom was described when CSP4 stated that

having less face-to-face contact makes it hard to connect. Connections must be intentional, and this begins with creating a platform for parents to have access to the principal as the technology problem-solver. CSP4 also shared how the classrooms have incorporated culturally relevant remote strategies because distance learning has been a challenge, and with more expectations placed on parents and grandparents, it is important to understand that distance learning is not their usual lifestyle. The school culture self-care theme was further revealed when CSP4 disclosed that an art therapist is now on staff, grace is given, a daily "welcome back" message is delivered, there are remote Monday assemblies and book clubs with African American authors, and a personal message is sent to the students' emails. In the school community, individual self-care is incorporated into all parent classes based on monthly staff discussions identifying the parenting tip for the month.

CSP5, when asked about the pandemic's impact on school culture self-care, began by recalling how a survey was distributed to create a calendar of parent classes offered. This survey was followed up with a survey every month to determine which direction to take. The challenges of not being able to see parents and have individual interactions have led the school to revamp how school teams are organized and to create new values. Students are asked what they are going to achieve today and what the goal for the day is before the online virtual classroom session begins. A distance learning academy option has been made available for those who choose to remain remote learners. CSP5 shared how principal bedtime reads have been expanded to community members, including pediatricians, doctors, newscasters, and clergy. This extended social media reach has provided opportunities for learning individual self-care strategies. Also, more partnerships have been established. A food pantry is on site so students are not just receiving lunch and breakfast, but now everyone in the family can get food and monthly grocery

bags delivered. School culture has been squeezed during the pandemic, yet the self-care of staff, students, and parents seems to remain a priority for CSP5.

CSP6 revealed the school culture self-care theme when sharing how recruiting and retention is happening in person and virtually during the pandemic. CSP6 stated current families are visited with food boxes supporting individual environments, and CSP6 is constantly thinking of what students and staff need. The PTO also created a social justice and equity committee and has begun to address equity issues like food insecurity and housing insecurity. Previously there was no systemic approach to managing so many equity issues. Now every adult in the building is focusing on every student and every family while making sure translation services to support all parents are available. CSP6 recognized the disadvantages of seclusion and isolation for school culture and said that helping parents know how to support their students' social and emotional well-being is part of the classroom experience. CSP6 currently is making sure there are parent discussion times with the deans to explore parenting, that self-care resources are available, and that a counselor is accessible to parents on a weekly basis. CSP6 also shared that in the school community, the importance of having more social media posts on individual students, such as posts from doodle time during peace circles, was recognized. These posts spike as family members share them. CSP6 further stated,

> "*And while this trauma impacts everybody differently. And for some it is significant and for others it is milder. I don't think there's anybody who hasn't felt impacted by this pandemic and I have come to find that it's really important for parents to feel cared for and supported in this time.*"

Finally, the last glimpse of school culture self-care comes via the third subtheme of personal self-care (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Teng, 2018). The stories shared by charter school

principals suggest that during this pandemic, personal self-care has been at the core of each school community. Personal self-care involves the use of time, activities, and mental health techniques. Participant CSP1 voiced how recognizing their calling as a servant leader has helped to them to develop a trusting relationship with their team during the pandemic, to find a balance by saving time daily to be present for their own family and children, to prioritize continuously, and to know when to disconnect. CSP2 described learning how to take the weekend off and to avoid temptations to work. For the first time CSP2 took the full two-week Christmas break, recognizing that they are an individual living through a difficult experience and that they must be vulnerable enough to share that. CSP2 emphasized balancing work-home life, avoiding being a boss in the home and instead engaging as spouse and parent, and taking time daily to find calm.

CSP3's personal reflection further supported this final subtheme related to school culture self-care. CSP3 described how it is important to know one's calling, experience personal gratification by knowing that one is making a difference in the school, learn to feel one's own way, and remain balanced by taking care of oneself. CSP4 shared various self-care strategies during the pandemic, such as participating in more martial arts and workouts, going to different parts of the city to decompress, making sure to be prepared for each Monday, leaning into their team, and booking a trip every month to have a change of scenery with no work. CSP5 discussed how having their own child attend the same school is a stress reliever, how creating a strong community in the building requires an energetic mentality and meditation, how knowing staff are still reaching multiple students is comforting, and how having bonding events with others demonstrates caring for oneself. CSP6 described maintaining their faith, recognizing their purpose, knowing how to choose between their personal career and their personal life, saying no

comfortably, knowing their personal journey, turning the phone off, self-reflecting in their journal, and most importantly, practicing love.

Summary of Themes Revealed by the Participants

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of charter school principals to recruit and retain students of color. This involved learning about what services are offered to attract and keep students and families of color. The researcher's conversations with six charter school principals revealed five distinctive themes related to the experience of recruiting and retaining students of color and the other services that are provided. These are:

- Recruitment (Cetinkaya, 2016; Bulman, 2004)

- Retention communication (Beck et al. (2014; Dauber, 2013 West et al., 2017)

- Other services curriculum (Brown & Makris, 2018; Holmes Erickson, 2017)

- Leadership relationships (Adzima, 2014; Sun & Ni, 2015)

- School culture self-care (Gawlik, 2018; Goodman et al., 2017; O'Donnell & Swanson, 2016)

Phenomenology seeks the essential truth of something. These themes are intertwined threads and not discrete concepts. van Manen (1990) describes themes as parts of a whole. While these themes are only elements of the principals' lived experiences, when woven together, a cluster of four ovals become apparent. The principals' lived experiences connect to a greater understanding of pedagogy. This study was concerned with finding out which strategies charter school principals utilize in the recruitment and retention of students of color. When the participants shared their experiences recruiting and retaining students of color, they revealed very individual approaches that demonstrate their knowledge of the profession. These approaches can be referenced by others who are seeking to understand how to recruit and retain students of color during a worldwide pandemic. One participant described it this way: *"I've*

been, you know, making sure that I'm prepared when they come back on Monday that they're going to get the exact rollout that I want them to get because I only have one try to do this right, because I don't have time to waste."

The different descriptions given by the study participants regarding their personal experiences in recruiting and retaining students of color show the parallels among the themes. First, each participant had experienced recruitment firsthand. Each was involved to varying degrees in the recruitment of students of color, but all referred to community locations. Each participant described their active participation in activities at various community sites. Second, each participant suggested that it was important to be visible to and engaged with others when recruiting. The participants also indicated they wholeheartedly believe in the missions of their charter schools. All participants mentioned the importance of regularly engaging with parents during the recruitment process, understanding who they are recruiting, and knowing why they are recruiting students of color. One study participant phrased it this way: "*Because if you're grounded and rooted in your why it is kind of the bar of where you make decisions from so like if it doesn't align to your why or what you believe is truly important whether like professionally, personally, and spiritually or whatever, then you have to say no."*

Study participants linked their student retention efforts to communication. This second theme brought forth many commonalities among the participants, especially in terms of progress reporting to students and parents. Many of the activities the charter school principals described consisted of behaviors that supported communication between home and school. One quotation capturing this experience is as follows:

> *"And we have worked with some of our parents of color to actually make sure that we're living up to the work that we want to do to be a school environment that serve children of*

> *color especially for me as a white leader. I think that it is incredibly important to be*
>
> *doing that work. So, we have a lot of parent involvement in our school."*

Another shared attribute of the principals' experiences was the role of the charter school principal in communicating expectations to the staff, families, and students. This provided valuable insight into what the participants are doing to retain students of color at their charter schools.

A third theme of other services curriculum also appeared. As the participants disclosed the other services that are offered to students of color to recruit and retain them, the curriculum appeared as the common thread. All participants indicated art, college and career readiness, and parent education as among the other services offered. All of these services are highlighted during recruitment and designed to keep students returning. College and career readiness was described especially passionately by all participants, with one stating the importance of exposing students to potential careers: *"If they don't see it in their community, they have to see it in their educational community because if they don't see it, they will not know that one day you can do this, you can have this."*

Study participants described many opportunities for engagement with others, yet no one described themselves as the leader. Each was very humble in their remarks. When examining the data, however, it became evident that leadership relationships was the fourth theme appearing in the interwoven tapestry of the principals' lived experiences. One study participant made this humble comment recognizing teachers: *"I cannot do this work without you. Together we make this work good and we make it correct, and we make our students successful like it is not only me it is them."* All the participants made numerous references to their relationships with families, staff, and students, but no two relationships were identical, only similar.

The study participants all had similar experiences with school culture. As the participants described their school communities, it became obvious that self-care was an important aspect of how each nurtured their school culture. Each shared practices of pre-pandemic self-care as they related to staff, students, and parents. They also shared how the pandemic has impacted the individual environment, classroom, and school community. One participant described the impact this way: "*So we have high expectations for academics, and we have love and care for our students. And we have partnership with our families at the forefront of our work. We're just doing it six feet apart and masks or on computer screens.*" None of the participants expressed any grief. Shared among the study participants was a recognition of the importance of personal self-care related to their time, activities, and mental health.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following van Manen's (1990) lead in seeking to understand the lived experiences of six charter school principals in recruiting and retaining students of color, the researcher uncovered five themes. This study was pedagogical in nature since throughout it, the researcher searched for meaning in what charter school principals do to better serve the needs of students of color through recruitment and retention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of six charter school principals in the Midwest about recruiting and retaining students of color. The researcher sought to know more about the principals' lived experiences recruiting students to attend their schools, their strategies for retaining them, and the other services offered to support student recruitment and retention. This researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of the participants and looked for meaning and themes within the lived experiences of the principals.

Research Question

This study asked the following research question: "What are charter school principals experiences to recruit and retain students of color in the Midwest through admission policies or practices, retention strategies, and offered services?" During the six interviews, beyond the initial open ended question, a total of 72 follow-up questions were asked across all the participants. These questions were specific to each experience and allowed the principals to expand on the lived experiences they described. No follow-up interviews were needed.

Discussion of Themes

The researcher began this study by examining the literature to find out more about charter school growth. Research indicates that charter school growth is contributing to
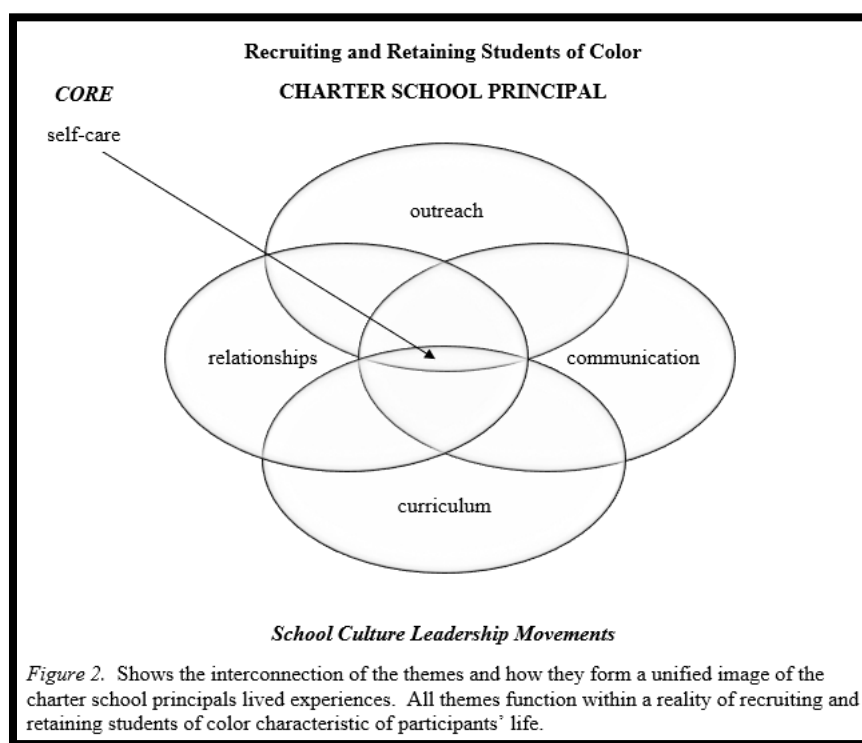
segregation. Within that body of research, many explanations are provided, representing various viewpoints and ideologies as to why more segregation exists now than in the times prior to *Brown vs. Board of Education*. As discussed in the literature, charter school principals are involved in more activities than traditional principals; such activities include managing facilities and fiscal duties (Cetinkaya, 2016; Rudo & Partridge, 2016). The literature indicates charter school principals have a role that differs from that of traditional principals, and the study's findings confirm this (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Sun & Ni, 2015). Recruiting and retaining students of color is complex and yet very rewarding, according to the participants.

The analysis of the themes emerging from recruitment, retention, and other services offered shows how the themes are intertwined. The researcher divided the findings into five essential themes that were captured in all six of the charter school participants' lived experiences. Together, these themes form a picture. When visualizing how charter school principals described their lived experiences, one might imagine each of the themes as an oval moving in a circular motion to the right independently but in unison with the other themes' ovals. Only one word was used per theme.

The following figure presents a cluster of the four themes. They are outreach, communication, curriculum, and relationships. They appear balanced, with each one overlapping all of the others while crossing paths to create a fifth oval that is vertical to the others. This fifth oval represents the fifth theme of self-care. This fifth theme appears to cross all the themes as it is created by the other four ovals yet is identified at the core of all the themes.

This figure reflects ovals moving about in a circular fashion. As the researcher listened to the participants' stories, she could hear motion in their stories: how they moved about the school community, how they flowed with their staff and teachers, how they navigated their relationships

with students and families, and as one participant shared, how they have managed during the pandemic by treading water. The themes in motion are illustrated in the figure titled *School Culture Leadership Movements.* This figure shows the relationships each of the themes has to the others as the charter school principal moves through the process of recruiting and retaining students of color. Ovals depict how the outreach, communication, curriculum, and relationship themes are continuous and at the core of each is self-care. It is not assumed this fifth theme is smaller in size or less in motion compared to the others. Rather, it is assumed that the core permeates the motion of all the others because against the canvas of school culture, all of the participants' stories reveal how important self-care is (see Figure 2).

Recruiting and Retaining Students of Color

CHARTER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

CORE

self-care

outreach

relationships

communication

curriculum

School Culture Leadership Movements

Figure 2. Shows the interconnection of the themes and how they form a unified image of the charter school principals lived experiences. All themes function within a reality of recruiting and retaining students of color characteristic of participants' life.

Recruitment outreach.

The theme of recruitment outreach captures how all of the participants were involved in varying degrees with the recruitment and retention of students of color (Glenn, 2011; Lee,2016).

The stories were full of rich details of individual experiences and transparency about how each participant flows in their role as a charter school principal. While each had a unique approach, they shared many strategies and approaches for engaging families in their schools. Their facial expressions as they spoke conveyed a high level of compassion for, commitment to, and sincerity toward the students in their care.

Outreach had two subthemes. The first is location, which consisted of many different types of places and was shown to be the most prevalent way for outreach. Participants actively reached out to their communities by going to places like barber shops or visiting other community town halls. The participants described physically going to homes to visit families and bring literature about their schools.

Outreach had another subtheme, which was purpose and design. It became obvious while listening to each participant that the purpose and design of outreach were intentional; outreach was incorporated into the charter school model. It seems outreach is an integral part of the principal's responsibilities in the charter school model, as charter schools are intentionally set up to recruit students of color. Purpose and design also include understanding the history of neighborhoods.

Retention communication.

The second finding was the theme of retention communication (Bickmore & Dowell, 2015; Hoyer & Sparks 2017; West et al., 2017). Two subthemes for retention communication came about when discussing retaining students of color. The first was progress reporting to students and parents about individual student growth. This often happened in face-to-face meetings, conferences, carpool lines, written weekly communication, and other informal encounters.

The next subtheme for retention communication was expectations. Each participant described how they communicate their high expectations by being visible in the building and listening to parents. Participants embedded into school culture expectations for learning, and one participant stressed how the school is not focused on standardized tests but focused on helping students understand why tests exist in the real world.

Other services curriculum.

A third theme common to the study participants was the other services curriculum (Brown & Makris, 2018; Holmes Erickson, 2017). Other services are offered to attract and keep students, with the arts being the most common of these services. This subtheme of arts was often discussed as an intentional reflection of the students' interests. Another subtheme was college and career readiness. All participants described involving students in problem-based instruction, teaching all learners to internalize and master standards, and prioritizing multiple pathways of scholar learning because as one participant indicated, it is important to raise a generation of students who better understand the implications of race and class. The third subtheme of the other services curriculum was parent education. Parent education in the curriculum varied across schools, yet all participants described educating parents via varying degrees of involvement with their schools. There are opportunities for parents to be involved in decision-making, attend courses offered on site via school or community partnerships, and volunteer.

Leadership relationships.

This fourth theme relates to all the other themes. Leadership relationships became obvious while listening to study participants address what they do to recruit and retain students of color (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017; Auerbach, 2009; Brown & Makris, 2018; Kahlenberg, 2013). This theme appeared differently from the other three because it was deduced from the

themes that had previously appeared. Participants provided descriptions of families, staff, and student relationships while sharing what they do to recruit and retain students. In all of the interviews, participants mentioned how valuable it was to know their students and their families. Each fully described cherished relationships with staff and teachers while providing detailed narratives of their personal lived experiences as the charter school principal recruiting students. Through their actions to recruit and retain students, each of the principals respected differences among people, valued individuals, honored cultures, and revered community.

Each participant mentioned how they actively engage others in recruitment and retention efforts and described their job as a call, purpose, mission, or divine work. They respected differences in people and they valued keeping and growing relationships. Each shared how they valued individuals by respecting their personal leisure time. The participants work alongside teachers and inspire them. All of them expressed how they honor their staff and families with recognition celebrations and ceremonies and how they are advocates for them. The participants shared how they incorporate culturally relevant teaching strategies that honor culture and community into the curriculum, confirming leadership relationships as a theme that appeared from the previous three themes.

School culture self-care.

A fifth and final theme that was revealed is school culture self-care (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017 Gawlik, 2018; Goodman et al., 2017; O'Donnell & Swanson, 2016). This theme came to the surface when reflecting upon and reviewing study participants' interviews through the lens of pre-pandemic and pandemic narrative depictions of activities. This theme permeates and reinforces all the other themes and is seen as the point at which all the themes intersect and emanate from as previously illustrated.

All participants made clear that self-care in the school community is a priority for all stakeholders, especially during the pandemic. A common example of this was students acknowledging the need for self-care and learning to be scholars of self-care in the classroom and school community. While mental health is still considered taboo to some, all the study participants emphasized the importance of being healthy mentally. They described providing some form of weekly self-care message, encouraging staff to bring their best selves to work every day, and utilizing culturally relevant remote strategies to promote self-care.

On several occasions throughout the interviews, the participants shared experiences capturing the final theme of personal self-care. Participants shared how they had learned to manage their own mental health by goal setting, serving others, making time for personal relationships, and exercising. Participants shared how they attend to their own wellbeing by helping others to find their voices, thereby promoting self-care as part of the school culture. Some spoke of how some parents continue to return to the school because the school culture makes them feel cared for. None of the study participants indicated they had received other administrative support that backed their own professional growth in self-care, which raises questions about how this study could support charter school principals' growth in pedagogy.

Based upon these findings, it appears that different strategies can be developed and implemented to support charter school principals moving through and navigating their school cultures. School culture leadership movements to recruit and retain students of color can be traced to the five themes of outreach, communication, curriculum, relationships, and self-care, with self-care existing at the core for both the collective and the individual. This study exemplifies the need for charter school organizations and authorizers to support charter school principals as their pedagogy grows and develops while they are moving through the flow of

recruiting and retaining students of color. The collective stories of the participants and their shared experiences suggest the need for a closer look at developing reflective strategies for administrators.

The Role Charter School Principals Play in Recruiting and Retaining Students of Color

The identified gap in the literature this study addressed involved what charter school principals specifically do to recruit and retain students of color and what other services are offered at their schools within the context of charter school growth (Eastman et al., 2017; Finley, 2015; Gawlik, 2018; Holmes Erickson, 2017; Jabbar, 2015; Nelson, 2018). The study sought to discover more about charter school principals' contributions to charter school recruitment and retention, moving beyond answers such as that the charter school design targets student of color or parents want to be with like parents. This study was an opportunity to find out more about the behaviors of charter school principals when recruiting and retaining students of color.

Research indicates that parents of children of color select charter schools because of parent-to-parent demographic relationships and moreover, that it is the design and policies that are creating the demand for charter schools in the marketplace (reference).. The data from the participants' stories suggest parents remain at the participating schools because of the high caliber of individuals leading these school communities. This study shows that charter school principals are actively involved in retaining students of color. If the themes identified are accurate, then charter school principals contribute more to charter school growth than what is currently being reported in the research. This information has implications for how state departments of education support charter schools. Capitalizing on the information generated from the study, the following seven recommendations are made.

Implications for Professional Practice

    Recommendations for charter school principals to assist with recruiting and retaining students of color.

- Use research-based strategies during recruitment for family engagement outreach;

- Manage change communication to retain students;

- Enhance professional development opportunities to support a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum;

- Provide mentors to support a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum;

- Incorporate high-impact strategies to engage stakeholders in the school culture;

- Integrate work-life balance strategies into the school culture; and

- Create a national certification for charter school principals.

    Use research-based strategies during recruitment for family engagement outreach.

In adherence to van Manen's (1990) demand that pedagogy drive research in education and practice, charter school principals must seek best practices as determined by research then apply them in their own schools. Many factors contribute to students attending charter schools. In this study, outreach was a major theme associated with recruitment. Outreach involves actively reaching out to families by visiting various community locations, developing outreach campaign strategies, building outreach relationships with other community-based entities, and engaging in personal outreach to individual families .

    Considering these findings, one suggestion for incorporating outreach into charter school administration preparation programs is to use research-based strategies in the curriculum. Expanding traditional principal preparation programs to incorporate more learning tailored toward principals' recruitment outreach pedagogy is a way that this could be done since the

number of charter school principal master's degree preparation programs is quite small. Spending time explaining the importance of how to identify various locations in the community is a place to begin. One could then move onto a class that addresses how targeted campaigns can be used to build family engagement as well as recruit the next class. Future charter school principals should also explore how building community partnerships supports recruitment. Finally, as part of this outreach course offering, in considering how to enhance personal outreach to individual family members, self-care should be incorporated as the core of all recruitment efforts in the school culture.

Another suggestion is to create a think tank that becomes a repositor of American charter school education. This depository is a place where stories of charter schools and traditional schools can exist together; namely, a museum that exhibits U.S. innovation in education over time. This museum could be a place where the purpose and design of charter schools is showcased for the innovation that exists in the education landscape. Many conversations about equity are occurring as charter schools are discussed in the context of increasing segregation. The equity gap should be transparent in the museum as well. It should not be surprising for those serving children of color or anyone else. It should all be in this museum so maybe more people would want to get involved in solving problems children of color face and be proud to be Americans. The museum could document in real time how education is celebrated. Every charter school could be represented in some fashion. The goal is outreach to those who are doing the work every day by honoring them.

Manage change communication to retain students.

Another implication of this study is the need for clear policies that support a transparent charter school application process so that innovation is not hindered by established decision-

making processes. Charter school boards are managing change communication to retain students of color from the first charter school design session. Managing change communication to retain students begins with policies that govern the charter school application process for both the authorizer and the charter applicant, including the expectation of progress reporting. According to the participants, the purpose and design of their schools are intentional in supporting diversity; therefore, the charter school application process could include progress reporting to students and parents from the authorizer and the charter board.

This would bring more accountability to authorizers' decisions as they would be expected to provide a more in-depth progress report to the public than a public notice of a hearing. This progress report would need to communicate in simple terms why a certain decision was made. It should not be a press release or board minutes but a report that fosters actual intentional knowledge building so the capacity level of the community increases regardless of the decision. During the application season, the charter school board could report on progress while the application is moving through the process towards approval. This reporting would be part of a communication plan that embeds progress reporting into the school culture to promote retention in practice and not just in writing.

Retention communication progress reporting could become more pronounced in the policies that address the authorization of charter schools. Retention communication could be embedded from the beginning, with the charter school board initially setting policies that embrace progress reporting. That is, there should be more visible reporting to the public about expectations of academic performance and operational duties so that charter school board members are held accountable.

Enhance professional development for a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum.

One suggestion that comes to mind when examining the data from the study is the need to design enhanced charter school professional development opportunities related to writing a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum. Charter school principals would benefit from learning how to retain students, thereby keeping the enrollment flow steady. This would allow the school culture to evolve to incorporate relevant strategies that meet the needs of students of color. State entities that authorize charter schools should recognize the varying degrees of responsibilities charter school principals have compared to traditional principals. The entities should incorporate best practices into the services that are offered to support charter schools, particularly as these practices pertain to retaining students of color.

Related to this idea is professional development for teachers so that they might learn how to embed a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum into unit plans and lesson plans. Having a scope and sequence of how the culturally relevant and responsive curriculum is manifest in each classroom would be useful to the charter school principal when reporting to parents and students about what is in the written curriculum and what is in the taught curriculum. It should also be ensured that the curriculum materials represent students of color in proportion to their place in the classroom. In other words, the school should have a plethora of library books whose characters look like the students in the classroom and are written by people of color.

Defining and identifying what is culturally relevant is not something that can be done easily. It takes time to learn the ways and customs that define the lives of a group of people in a community. One must do the work of learning to move in cultures other than their own. Each charter school principal described a lived experience of needing to learn to understand the school

community within the context of the greater community. This is a reminder that each school community is different and unique, as are the people who live in that community every day and who send their children to school there each year, regardless of whether a charter school is present.

Identifying a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum should begin with the charter school principal leading the way in understanding the local culture or ways of doing things. It is from this knowledge of local beliefs, customs, sacred ways, and even eating habits that a curriculum can include culturally proficient strategies. One participant suggested teaching history from different points of views.

Provide mentors for a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum.

Throughout the interviews, the study participants all referred to the need for mentoring teachers about a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum. A mentor network for charter school principals would connect the principals with other charter school principals who are further along in offering a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum as a retention strategy. The mentor network would be a safe place to ask questions and learn from discussions. It would also provide principals opportunities to learn from one another by sharing ideas and jointly solving problems of practice. The opportunity to celebrate would naturally evolve as each shared their own lived experience.

Mentoring for a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum also could include local mentoring from people who are in the same village as the charter school. Recognizing that the school is a center of expertise and should be doing outreach in the local community, mentoring presents a good opportunity to collaborate. This idea is illustrated by a charter school principal establishing a formal collaborative two-way mentoring relationship with a local business or city

hall leader. Through this sharing of knowledge and building of relationships, the school becomes more exposed to the way of life for families in that community and builds rapport. Ultimately, this would lead to opportunities for students to go out into the community to investigate local existing career pathway choices.

Incorporate high-impact strategies in the school culture to engage relationships.

Engaging relationships cause the school culture to freely flow with learning, as the study participants shared in their stories. All study participants spoke of using strong communication skills to retain and engage families, parents, and students in their school communities. One recommendation is to expand the availability of building capacity conversations during which individuals discuss how to incorporate high-impact engaging relationship strategies into professional learning opportunities. Another is to have regularly scheduled semester roundtable conversations among charter school principals. These conversations would be led by a state charter school organization and hosted regionally, with the goal of supporting principals in meeting student retention goals. Another idea is to expand capacity conversations that incorporate high-impact engaging relationship strategies into family engagement. Such a process would involve gathering ongoing data from parents to find out what parental education programs they would like to see offered and provide them with a mechanism to give input about academic performance expectations. Considering students drive the funding for authorizers' compliance and charter school contract deliverables, it seems like a small investment of time compared to the costs of reducing school choice options.

Integrate self-care strategies into the school culture.

A proposal for how to integrate self-care, and specifically work-life balance strategies, into the school culture at the secondary level is to begin teaching students during driver's

education class how transportation is a place where work-life balance can happen and how knowing how to drive will help them as adults to escape from work by driving to a location to decompress, as one of my study participants stated. Also, it would be stressed that some adults have to commute and that that time can be a time of quiet self-care.

Another proposal for charter school principals to integrate work-life balance strategies into the school culture is to examine the other services offered and intentionally create lesson plans that include self-care strategies. By teaching the curriculum with self-care included, a teacher would refine their personal pedagogy, ultimately impacting the school culture and reinforcing a work-life balance. For example, each quarter of the year could focus on one aspect of self-care, like an explore and enhance cycle, as described by study participants. One quarter various aspects of self-care could be explored, and next quarter one aspect could be selected and enhanced. The cycle would then repeat. During each exploration aspect, several approaches could be explored. These include reflective time, art therapy, doodling, and working out. Students could pick one to focus on for the next quarter. The goal is to support those in the school culture with learning new techniques to keep life balanced now and in the future.

Create a national certification for charter school principals.

Finally, talented individuals are living the challenge of retaining a student body that is made up of more than 50% students of color who need an excellent education so that poverty is no longer their way of life. The research is clear about the risks to a student of color's life when an education is not provided (Hannor-Walker, Bohecker, Ricks, & Kitchens 2020; Vereen, Giovannetti, & Bohecker, 2020). This final recommendation emerges from the data regarding charter school principals' pedagogy when recruiting and retaining students of color. A national certification for charter school principals could be created. A video library would allow charter

school principals to tell their stories so that others might learn. This sharing vault would provide a national certification of recognition indicating the principal in question has deposited their knowledge into the history of charter school education. Rather than someone else writing the history of charter schools, the principals themselves would share their real lived experiences in real time.

Recommendations for further research

This study highlights the importance of charter school principals in recruiting and retaining students of color. It illustrates how important their actions are in the school community with the staff, teachers, students, parents, families, and community at large. This study points towards several areas of future research on charter school growth. These include:

- How charter school principals have influenced the curriculum during the pandemic;

- How local education agencies collaborate with charter school principals;

- What the overall impact of a charter school principal is upon college graduation rates;

- How self-care occurs at other charter schools, so as to maximize opportunities to support all schools; and

- How other charter school principals recruit and retain students of color.

Research should be done to investigate ways charter school principals have influenced the curriculum during the pandemic.

This study sheds light on what charter school principals have done during the pandemic, such as using culturally relevant remote strategies. Participants made mention of nurturing remote relationships and emphasizing in their communication accountability for following up on expectations to reach out to families each week. Further research should be done to investigate

the ways the curriculum has been influenced by charter school principals during the pandemic. How has it been determined? What culturally relevant remote strategies have been used? What has this process looked like? These questions would help charter schools prepare for future unexpected events and confirm whether the presence of an art therapist, book clubs with African American authors, or the inclusion of parents in the process of creating calendars for parent classes influence the curriculum.

Future research regarding how local education agencies collaborate with charter school principals should continue.

One participant shared how the local education agency was quite supportive of collaboration between charter school principals and traditional principals during recruitment timeframes. This finding suggests that future research should continue investigating how local education agencies support charter school principals, especially in areas where charters are growing because of students of color. Scholars should continue to look for more commonalities between traditional principals and charter school principals in the same district. This would be quite helpful as evidence is sought to make education investments stronger.

Begin to research the overall impact of a charter school principal upon college graduation rates.

Beginning to research the overall impact of a charter school principal on college graduation rates would help show the impact charter school principal leadership movements have on college graduates of color. How the leadership motions of the charter school principal affect high school graduation rates could also be explored. For instance, does a given charter school have a college transition support program? Finally, it is necessary to begin considering longitudinal data of college graduates and charter school high school graduates of color.

Other charter schools need to be studied to determine how self-care opportunities can be maximized to support all schools.
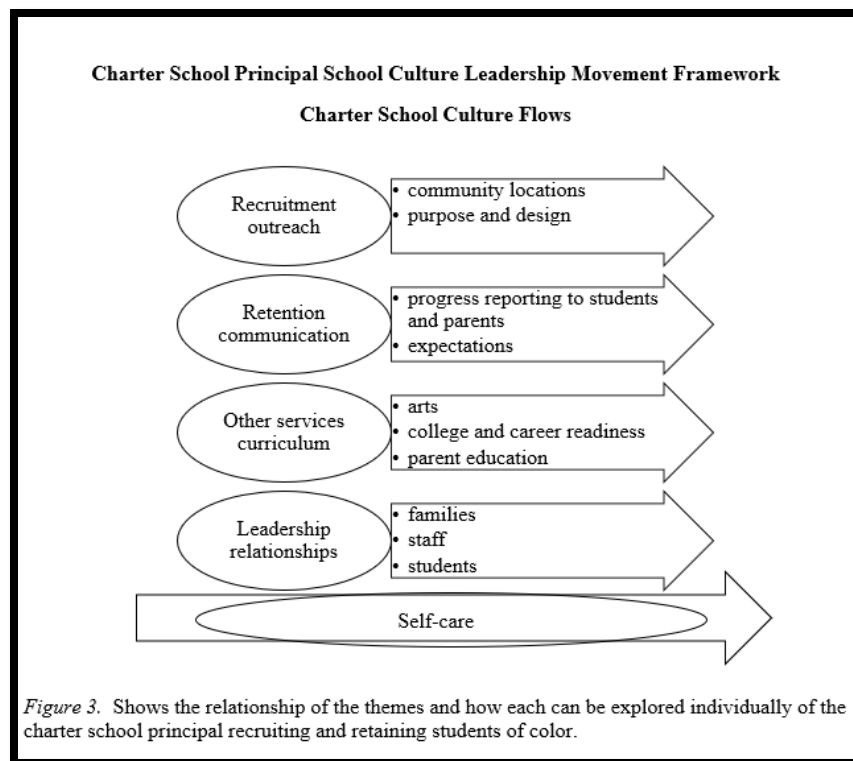
Seeing through to the core of the study participants' experiences was the most rewarding experience for the researcher. Being able to see through their eyes and experience through their storytelling the passion their teachers have and how they pulled together during this pandemic to meet this challenge and take care of each other was enlightening. Other charter schools need to be studied to determine how the principals and teachers are taking care of each other during this pandemic. It would be wise to explore further what self-care has looked like during this pandemic, which could change future practice and pedagogy. While discussing the pandemic, one participant mentioned that it is important to take advantage of the opportunity to make sure teachers are equipped with the resources they need ***to maximize support to all schools***. Future studies on how charter school principals have taken care of teachers during this pandemic providing deeper knowledge of how the charter school culture shifts during a worldwide health crisis.

Charter school principals play a major role when families are deciding whether to send their children to a charter school. Charter school principals are part of the reason parents remain at charter schools. The study participants—the principals—seem to be more of an influence on parents making this decision than the presence of other parents who look like them. It is the charter school principal's leadership in building relationships that keeps the school culture moving and thriving, which is why it is important to maximize opportunities to support all schools with research-based strategies.

Keep on probing to further research-based knowledge to better understand charter school principal movements as they recruit and retain students of color.

Future research should expand the number of charter school principals interviewed to identify if others have had similar lived experiences and to check themes. This study could be replicated by expanding the number of participants to obtain additional data and to better understand charter school principals' movements as they recruit and retain students of color. The study participants shared how they each contributed to learning in the classroom, whether this meant modeling a lesson, taking a teaching period, or providing needed classroom supports like an art therapist. Looking at more participants' lived experiences would provide more evidence to strengthen charter school principal pedagogy.

The Charter School Principal School Culture Leadership Movement Framework (Fig. 3) shows how to further probe this study's findings either by component or altogether. Such probing would contribute to a better understanding of the flow of culturally responsive strategies while recruiting and retaining students of color, especially in relationship to charter school principals' impact on charter school growth.

Charter School Principal School Culture Leadership Movement Framework

Charter School Culture Flows

Recruitment outreach
- community locations
- purpose and design

Retention communication
- progress reporting to students and parents
- expectations

Other services curriculum
- arts
- college and career readiness
- parent education

Leadership relationships
- families
- staff
- students

Self-care

Figure 3. Shows the relationship of the themes and how each can be explored individually of the charter school principal recruiting and retaining students of color.

In Closing

This study began with a question about what charter school principals are doing amid the national conversation about charter school growth. Phenomenological methods were used to gain an understanding of what charter school principals do to recruit and retain students of color. In particular, the significant stories and experiences of six Midwest urban charter school principals were collected as data.

By considering what charter school principals do to recruit and retain students of color, the researcher was able to identify five themes common to all study participants. Seeing through their experiences and stories, the researcher uncovered the themes of recruitment outreach, retention communication, other services curriculum, leadership relationships, and school culture self-care. These themes gave value and insight to the movements of each participant. While each

study participant's story was quite unique, these themes were consistently present. Each shared their lived experiences of being on the education frontlines and doing the work of true essential servants helping to make the United States a better place.

These five themes of charter school principals' movements while recruiting and retaining students of color, as seen in this study's findings, were perceived differently by each participant, and each participant had their own unique experience. For this reason, it is hard to generalize the insight and knowledge gained in this study to a larger population. Nevertheless, through the lived stories and experiences of the study participants that were shared, a strong relationship among these five themes and charter school principals' impact on recruiting and retaining students of color appeared.

Informing charter school principals in training about how to recruit and retain students of color through appropriate culturally relevant instruction, teacher support, and other services would help the principals prepare for the future. The world would be a better place if charter school growth was better understood, and in particular, if it were better understood whether this system is able to meet the current needs of students of color and retain those students. This study showed charter school principals honor cultures, work to build trust, are thoughtful and vulnerable, prioritize family contact, and advocate for students of color.

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Appendix A

NIH Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Bernadette Anderson** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 01/19/2018.

Certification Number: 2599388.

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

This research is being conducted by Bernadette Anderson as her doctoral research project at Northwest Nazarene University. The purpose of this research study is to explore what charter school principals are doing to recruit and retain students of color. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are over the age of 18, and a charter school principal who has been in that position for at least one year in a school that has at least 50% minority students reported in the state student information system.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign this Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will be asked to participate in an audio/video taped interview and if you agree, this interview is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.
3. You will be asked to reply to an email after the first interview asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the first interview.
4. You may be asked to participate in a second audio/video taped interview to explore any follow-up questions. If you agree this interview may last up to 30 minutes.
5. You may be asked to reply to an email after the second interview asking you to confirm the themes that were the result of coding and data analysis.

These procedures will be competed at a day and time mutually decided upon by the participant and principal investigator and will take a total time of between 30-60 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. I will be requesting demographic information. The researcher will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.
3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet and the key to the cabinet will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand charter schools.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Bernadette Anderson can be contacted via email at ███████████████████████
██
████████████████████████████████

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

I can give my consent to participate in this study:

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   Date

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be audio/video taped in this study:

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix C

<u>Recruitment Email to Charter School Principal:</u>
My name is Bernadette Anderson, and I am conducting my doctoral research project at
Northwest Nazarene University. This research has been approved by the Institutional Review
Board (IRB) at Northwest Nazarene University. The purpose of this research study is to explore
what charter school principals are doing to recruit and retain students of color.

I am looking for charter school principals who have been in that position for at least one year in a
school that has at least 50% minority students reported in the state student information system.
Involvement in this study would require participating in one initial interview and possibly a
follow-up interview. Your responses will not be shared in any way that would identify you or
your school. You may elect not to participate and in no way will your school or you as a
principal suffer any adverse consequences for declining to participate.

If interested in participation, please respond to this email and another email will send with the
consent form and to schedule a time for the interview. The consent form will need to be signed
and returned through email prior to the interview. The time for each interview will be between
30-60 minutes. You may withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the
researcher. Bernadette Anderson can be contacted via email at ████████████████████
██

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix D

Member Checking E-mail 1

Date

Dear---

Thank you for your participation in the study this past semester. Attached is your transcript. Please let me know if this accurately depicted our conversation. If you have any suggestions or modifications, please let us know. If you have thought of any additional information or if you would like to discuss anything further in a follow-up interview, I would be happy to schedule that.
Thank you again for your help and we look forward to hearing from you.

Bernadette Anderson
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University

IRB Approval# 11012020

Appendix E

Member Checking E-mail 2

Date

Dear---

Thank you for your participation in the study this past semester. I wanted to let you know some of the themes that resulted from the interviews of all participants (see below). Please let me know if these accurately depicted our conversation. If you have any suggestions or modifications, please let me know.

- Recruitment outreach
- Retention communication
- Other services curriculum
- Leadership relationships
- School culture self-care

Thank you again for your help and we look forward to hearing from you.

Bernadette Anderson
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University

IRB Approval# 11012020