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**Charter schools, achievement and segregation:
The school choice movement and its effects on diversity and
equality in public education**

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**Charter schools, achievement and segregation:
The school choice movement and its effects on diversity and
equality in public education**

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**Charter schools, achievement and segregation:
The school choice movement and its effects on diversity and
equality in public education**

by

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This literature review addresses the increasingly popular charter school movement and its effectiveness in academic achievement and multicultural diversity. It examines the literature starting with the foundations of the charter school movement to the present state of American charter schools. Implications for charter school counselors are discussed. Although charter schools are gaining support in some public arenas, and with policymakers, more evidence is needed before charter schools can embody public official's claims as the new solution in public education.

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Chapter i: Introduction

The notion of charter schools in the United States first surfaced in the late 1980s (Molnar, 1996; Vergari & Mintrom, 1996) and has since become a widespread trend in alternative education. In many cases, these experimental schools provide an answer to public school systems divided along class and racial lines (Buras, 2009). However, admissions to charter schools can be selective, depending on the school's specific mission (Buras, 2009). Subsequently, some have argued these circumstances and selection processes perpetuate racial segregation (Garcia, 2008). Clearly, this practice remains one of considerable debate in today's educational literature.

In the landmark case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the traditional public school system was formally desegregated in 1954. However many schools remain "segregated", or racially separated, for all intensive purposes. The term "segregation" is associated with cases such as *Brown v. the Board of Education*, and could mean several things. One, the term segregation may be associated with racial and ethnic discrimination and forced separation (Hajnal & Massey, 1995). Another use is to indicate the racial and ethnic separation that occurs due to socioeconomic factors, such as economic means, or matters of free will, such as the school choice movement. For this document, the term "segregation" will be used to denote the latter.

The growth of minority populations in urban areas, especially immigrant populations, may be contributing to this issue (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). According to the U.S. Census from 2000, over 14 million Hispanic respondents reported being foreign-born (U.S. Census Data, 2000). In 2000, Clotfelter (2004) found that more than 70% of

African American students attended schools whose majority were students of color. As a result, lack of diversity in education has become a widespread issue. Furthermore, studies have shown that a diverse education is linked with achievement. For instance, Black graduates of racially diverse schools held higher career goals than their counterparts who attended all-Black schools (Kahlenberg et al., 2000). Students of color from diverse backgrounds also more thoroughly understood the steps needed to achieve these goals. Moreover, diversity in education benefits students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. According to Gurin, Nagda and Lopez (2004), diverse educational environments benefit all students not because of mere contact with other ethnicities, but through equality, common goals and close interactions. This environment has the potential to foster students of all backgrounds who are “more motivated and better able to participate in a heterogeneous and complex society” (Gurin et al., 2004). Thus, diversity in education is linked with opportunity and success (Gurin, et al., 2004; Orfield, et al., 2001).

Many attempts to address issues of inequality in education have been made throughout the century. However, the most current and prominent one is the “school choice movement”. This movement encompasses the idea that market-like competition will fuel improvement in underperforming schools serving disadvantaged students (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). Within this movement, school vouchers, magnet schools and charter schools have all emerged as resources for change.

Charter schools are currently the central vehicle used to achieve this movement’s goals, while allowing public schools to thrive. A charter school can be defined as an

institute of public education that functions according to a pseudo-contract, or charter. This charter is generally agreed upon by the school's organizers and administrators and a governing body, such as a board of directors, that holds the school accountable to the charter's provisions (Bierlein, 1995). Given this element, charter schools still are held accountable to regulations in education, such as state-wide achievement testing. This article will focus on charter schools as the main representative of the school choice movement

As part of adhering to the pseudo-contract, charter schools must meet goals set by their governing organization; however these schools usually have greater freedoms as to how they meet these goals, whether academic or otherwise (O'Neil, 1996). Coleman, et al. (1996) also indicate that before the school choice movement arose, choices in education were limited to affluent families; now, many charter schools are founded to address issues of at-risk and high need students. The term "at-risk", however, is controversial, and charter schools rarely define what this specifically means in the students they serve (Cooper, et al., 2000).

Presently, over forty states have adopted laws and regulations to accommodate their growing charter school populations. In 2010 there are about 5,000 charter schools in the United States that serve over one million students of all ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and more (Booker, Gill, Sass & Zimmer, 2010; "U.S. Charter Schools", n.d.). While some view this growth as a step toward educational progress, others contend that these untraditional schools are dealing with issues that may negatively affect our children's futures.

There are many challenges facing fledgling charter school systems. Some of the more pressing issues involve obtaining funds and finding legal and business advice (Coleman, et al., 1996). Charter schools, like any other public entity, are obligated to uphold legal regulations, and to maintain an organization that is financially sound. Many charter schools also find it difficult to find ample and appropriate space to hold their classes; they have been contained in buildings ranging from a series of portables, to an office building or apartment complex (Coleman, et al., 1996). The lack of standardization for charter schools extends from their physical surroundings to their teaching approaches, as well as their student populations. Importantly, this variety makes it difficult for researchers to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of charter schools.

In addition to these considerations, racial and ethnic separation in charter schools is an important question for the educational community. Studies have found that charter schools educate a disproportionate amount of minority students compared with public schools. For example, in their study of states with more than 5,000 charter school students, Frankenberg and Lee (2003) found that 70% of Black students studied attend very segregated charter schools, while only 34% of Black students attend segregated public schools. Also, because of state mandates regarding racial integration, public schools would be racially and ethnically balanced if all the children in an area attended their assigned public school (Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). Saporito and Sohoni (2006) also suggest that Black students are willing to attend racially integrated schools. However, their White counterparts are less likely to do so, and increasing numbers of White students are leaving previously racially balanced schools.

Patterns of racial separation are even more profound between White and Latina/o students, and according to Saporito and Sohoni (2006), the charter school movement has had a large impact on the two groups' continued segregation. Despite these findings, research on Latina/o segregation in charter schools is mixed overall. Many English Language Learners (ELL's) identify as Latina/o, however, and Orfield and Lee (2005) have found a significant underrepresentation of ELL's in charter schools nationwide.

Thus, the market-like ideal that helped drive charter school formations is now a leading cause of racial separation in schools. Although public educators are aware of this growing concern, policymakers may be using the charter school "solution" as a way to avoid fixing racial separation issues.

Nevertheless, there are many examples of successful charter school systems. One example is the popular Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a college-preparatory public school system currently serving over 21,000 students in "underserved communities" ("KIPP/Knowledge is Power Program", n.d.). There is also new evidence that charter schools that educate at-risk students are increasing their high school graduation and college attendance rates (Booker, Gill, Sass & Zimmer, 2010). However, there have been no longitudinal studies to point to the long-term career, social, or personal success of charter school attendees.

Another successful example is the city of New Orleans' growing charter school movement. In 2005, the schools in Orleans Parish were the "second-worst-performing school district in the state, and in some schools 30 percent of seniors dropped out over the course of the year" (Laskow, 2010). After hurricane Katrina, the city has committed to

“building” a school system of open-enrollment charter schools with high teacher and administrator autonomy and better student results. In 2010, only one third of students are failing by state standards, compared with two thirds in the years before the hurricane (Laskow, 2010). This new system is called the Recovery School District, and is being made into a successful example of charter schools for the underprivileged New Orleans population. However, even these schools are faced with accountability problems, demonstrated by failed budget management, failures of personnel and a substantial lack of racial diversity.

Despite evidence that racial separation in charter schools may exist, there has been little action on the part of the educational community to ensure a racial and ethnic balance in charter schools (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003). In addition, considering the more than one million students in the US attending charter schools, and most of them students of color, there is little research on the implications of their choice and the level of satisfaction with their experience. The aim of this paper is to explore various aspects of charter schools and their implications for students of color, especially African American and Latino students. Racial segregation will be considered, and the consequences of this segregation for students of color who attend charter schools. In addition, the academic achievement of charter school students will be examined in conjunction with these same students’ experience of racial segregation. The purpose of this article is to determine the overall value of a charter school experience for a student of color in terms of academic and social success.

Chapter ii: An Overview of the School Choice Movement

The school choice movement is a phrase describing alternatives to traditional public schools (TPS's). These technically include magnet schools and school vouchers, however charter schools serve the largest body of students. The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992 (Orfield, Glascock, Robertson, & Coleman, 1997), and since then thousands of new schools have opened nationwide. Demonstratively, 419 new charter schools opened in the 2009-2010 school year in 39 states and the District of Columbia (Center for Education Reform, 2010). Given the rapid pace of charter school growth in the U.S., it can be concluded that the charter school movement's popularity is growing exponentially.

To better understand this growing movement, one must look at the schools' foundations. Trevino (2006) cites the Budde and Shanker Charter Model, a set of five principles that are the foundation of many modern charter schools in the United States. These five points outline the purpose of charter schools as: "choice for students; competition to break public schools' monopoly; school-based management; deregulation to remove constraining rules and policies; and accountability for results" (Trevino, 2006). There are different types of charter schools as well, including district-supported charter schools. These are underperforming TPS's that have been given consent to turn in to a charter school (Center for Education Reform, 2009). There are also "open enrollment" charter schools, which essentially start from scratch and will accept students from designated areas. When these schools become overpopulated in their facilities, they must revert to a lottery system. Lottery systems are a randomized way for students to apply to

attend the charter school and either be selected or not (Clark, Dwoyer, Gleason, Tuttle & National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2010).

This process of picking students through a lottery is widely used, but research shows striking issues with this system. First, schools may be choosing students based on their academic abilities (Orfield & Lee, 2005). If a school's charter has outlined that they must perform at a certain level on statewide tests, a school may not "choose" to admit a student that will compromise their charter, or essentially their existence. This may be a factor contributing to the exclusion of English Language Learners (ELL's) from many charter schools (Orfield, 2003). ELL's historically perform more poorly on state achievement tests than the general population, thus they may be eliminated from eligibility into many charter schools in an effort to maintain higher achievement standards.

Despite these serious findings, school choice has become an important movement used to address under-performing TPS's. Proponents of charter schools argue that creating a free choice environment for schools would drive competition in education, and force poorly performing TPS's to improve (Glascock, et al., 1997). Buechler (1996) states that charter schools were and are an attempt to inspire responsiveness in an innovative educational system that maintains access to the public.

Charter schools are public entities that are funded as such, but not governed in the same way as TPS's. Different states have different regulations regarding how many charter schools are permissible. As of 2008, for example, the state of New York's law allows no more than 200 charter schools to exist (Meyer, 2009). Charter schools have

fewer regulations than TPS's, but must meet the goals agreed upon in their specific charter. This could be performing well on state exams, or obtaining a certain achievement level on the National Report Card.

In order to perform well on exams, many charter schools need the financial support of the public. Charter schools are funded in different ways depending on the state, however there are a few overreaching regulations. Since charter schools are public schools, they are funded according to number of students enrolled (Center for Education Reform, 2009). Charter schools can receive funding either from the school district or the state, depending on how many students attend the school. However, comparing charter school funding to their public school counterparts differs dramatically from state to state, due to lack of national regulation for charter schools. The national average percentage of funds given to charter schools compared to TPS's is 61% (Center for Education Reform, 2009). Charter schools receive \$6,585 per student on average, while TPS's receive \$10,771. Thus, many charter schools raise funds in alternative ways, and are allowed to do so. Some charters hold fundraisers, such as 5K races, and obtain money from donors. For example, the successful KIPP charter school system lists approximately 45 donors on their website that contribute anywhere from \$50,000 to \$60 million (KIPP website). Clearly, influential sources are increasingly directing their resources to what they deem to be innovations in education.

These sources might see charter schools as the "new solution" to problems with the public educational system, but it is important they take all aspects of the movement into consideration. Academic achievement might be exemplary for some charter schools,

but for many others it is a struggle. The question is whether charter schools, on average, perform better academically than TPS's.

Chapter iii: Charter Schools and Achievement

Achievement in charter schools remains an important question in the charter school debate. Charter schools are sometimes hailed as the new innovators in education, but it is important to examine exactly how effective these schools are academically. Since the school choice movement has intended to raise the bar academically, student achievement in charter schools is examined thoroughly in the literature (CREDO, 2009; Estes, 2009; Hoxby, 2009; Lack, 2009; Ni, 2009; Orfield, 2005; Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001; Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

In order to examine academic achievement in charter schools, one must consider the student populations of these schools. Researchers have found that in general, charter schools serve minority populations as well as low-income students and families (Zimmer, et al., 2009). In addition, many of these students of color are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch at these charter schools (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

In terms of achievement, minority and low-income students have been found to have lower test scores in reading and math (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007) compared to their White and Asian counterparts,. One study suggests that although charter schools maintain their need for increased autonomy compared to public schools, there is no connection between their autonomy and strong test scores (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). In addition to autonomy, many charter schools insist on increasing their instructional time to students. For example, the KIPP school system hold a nine-hour school day, with required Saturday school every other weekend (“KIPP/Knowledge is Power Program”, n.d.). However, Zimmer and Buddin (2007) have found that increased instruction time

has little to do with better performance on achievement tests. Actually, their research has shown that the diverse subject matter these schools teach in their increased school hours may lead to poorer scores on math and reading tests (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

Increased autonomy for charter schools may allow them to use unconventional educational tactics like these. However, part of the school choice movement has outlined that charter schools can also serve as a vehicle to drive improvement in traditional public schools (TPS's) through market competition. Researchers argue that failing TPS's will not necessarily improve with competition from charter schools (Ni, 2009). Ni (2009) lists a variety of reasons why this is true; first, highly motivated students are more likely to enter charter schools, and to be supported by more involved parents. According to Ni (2009), this leaves the less motivated students clustered in low performing TPS's, which causes a cyclical negative effect on achievement. Essentially, performing poorly in school may become the norm for students in these TPS's, and peer pressure might be a factor in perpetuating these results (Ni, 2009). In addition, since TPS's generally receive funds according to attendance, less motivated students left in TPS's might be less likely to attend their school, therefore depleting that school's funding (Ni, 2009). A downward spiral might begin to occur, with money draining out of the school, causing schools to cut programs, which may cause even more motivated students to leave the school. Thus, charter schools might have exceedingly negative affects TPS's.

These findings aside, charter school students are still faced with academic challenges. As mentioned above, charter schools may employ a system of selecting students that will benefit their academic standing. This issue raises questions about the

fairness in evaluating charter schools academically. Since more motivated students with more supportive parents are sorting themselves into charter schools, comparing their academic achievement to students in TPS's is inherently flawed (Orfield, 2005).

Nonetheless, several studies have offered comparisons in achievement between charter schools and TPS's, and have conflicting findings. A study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO, 2009) found that most charter schools are producing academic results that are worse or no better than their public school counterparts. The findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or the National Report Card, bolster these findings with their assessment. The NAEP have found that fourth-graders in charter schools scored a 231 out of 500 on a mathematics assessment in 2009, while their public school counterparts scored 239 on the same test (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2010).

In contrast to these findings, Hoxby (2009) found that charter school students in New York City who were granted entry through a lottery system were faring significantly better academically than students in TPS's not chosen in the lottery. Hoxby's (2009) study implies that the lottery system has a direct effect on the educational, and perhaps life success of students who are chosen through the system. Similarly, the KIPP school system is producing successful students, and many KIPP schools are outperforming the other schools in their area with similarly high-minority, high-poverty populations (Lack, 2009). KIPP also has a high matriculation rate to college (KIPP website), and use their autonomy as a charter school to focus on college-going strategies for high-need minority students.

One of the biggest issues in achievement in charter schools is the exclusion of specific populations. As previously mentioned, ELL's are frequently excluded due to their historically low test scores (Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001). In addition to ELL's, students with disabilities are emerging as a group who are also underrepresented in charter schools. Some charter schools are designed specifically to serve students with disabilities (Texas Education Agency, 2005), but many more schools have turned them away. This may be because the school does not have the resources to serve these students, but according to federal law, all public schools must comply with the "zero reject" principle outlined in special education legislation (IDEIA, 2004; (Estes, 2009). Typically, students enrolled in charter schools that qualify for special education accommodations have "mild to moderate disabilities", and very rarely severe disabilities (Estes, 2009). In addition, many students with severe disabilities are denied services at charter schools because administrators "counsel" them out of attending the school, citing lack of resources or expertise (Estes, 2009). Despite this and other instances of non-compliance, parents of students with disabilities might seek out charter schools if they are dissatisfied with lack of services in their area school. The experience of seeking out a charter school and then being rejected due to severity of disability might be a traumatic event for a parent who wants to give their child the best possible educational experience. Charter schools are hailed as a possible alternative for failing TPS's. However, research has yielded mixed results in terms of achievement. In spite of these findings, President Obama's "Race for the Top" program is offering over \$4 billion dollars to improve educational rankings of low performing schools, and endorsing charters as a way to do so

(Orfield and Lee, 2005). States are expanding the number of charters allowed and loosening regulations on these alternative schools even further. As increasing numbers of TPS's close due to unacceptable academic performance, charter schools are emerging as a solution, and as a new area of contention.

Chapter iv: Charter Schools and Racial and Ethnic Separation

The student population of the school choice movement may be dictating the levels of academic achievement and thus the continued success of the movement. Evidence is emerging that many charter schools serve minority and low-income populations exclusively (Frankenberg, Lee, & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2003). These students might have a higher need for a quality education than other populations, but questions have been raised about racial “segregation” in charter schools. If charter schools, as part of the school choice movement, are serving these populations, they may be depriving the students of a diverse education.

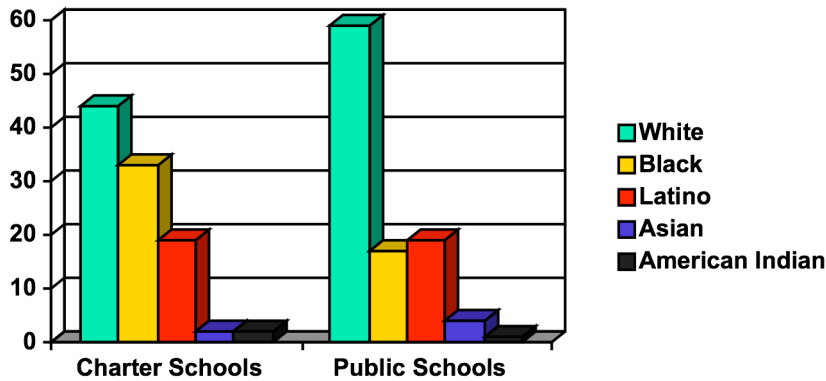
It is important to consider the use of the term “segregation” in the literature on charter schools and race. Significantly, many studies use this term, instead of the terms “separation” or “culture-specific” (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Kahlenberg, et al., 2000; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006; Renzulli, 2006; Garcia, 2007; Bifulco & Ladd, 2006) that may indicate similar constructs. In the past, the term segregation has been used to mean the separation of racial-ethnic groups based on discrimination and prejudice (Domina, Massey and Rothwell, 2009). This segregation has ranged from macro levels of society, such as states and counties, to micro levels, like neighborhoods and school districts (Hajnal & Massey, 1995). Because the nature of racial and ethnic separation in charter schools exists at the micro level and may not be based on prejudice or discrimination, the terms “racial and ethnic separation” or “culture-specific schools” might be more accurate in expressing the current disparities, and therefore will be used in this document henceforth.

Research has shown that charter schools are presently educating a disproportionate amount of minority students, especially African American children (Frankenberg, et al., 2003). This may be a direct result of the possibility that failing TPS's disproportionately service African American children. Racial segregation in charter schools can be understood as students being educated in environments with a significantly low level of racial balance. These same schools may educate either mostly students of color, of one or two particular groups, or White students almost exclusively (Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001).

In their study of this type of racial segregation, Frankenberg, et al. (2003) examined the charter school populations of sixteen states whose enrollment was at least 5,000 students. Their study found that in almost all of the 16 states, Black students in charter schools attend class with a higher percentage of Black students and a lower percentage of White students (Frankenberg, et al., 2003). Also, seventy percent of these African American charter school students attended "intensely segregated minority schools compared with 34% of Black public school students" (Frankenberg, et al., p. 10, 2003). This study found that patterns of racial segregation in charter schools for Latinos is mixed, although they are less segregated than Black charter school students. Below is a graphical representation of the White, Black, Latino, Asian and American Indian enrollment of charter school students in the states studied. As shown by this data, twice as many Black students attended charter school as they did TPS's. The graph shows 33% of all charter school students were Black, while only 17% of all public school students in states surveyed were Black (Frankenberg, et al., 2003).

Figure 1. Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Charter and Public Schools in 2003

US Charter School Enrollment



Source: Frankenberg, et al., 2003

These findings aside, charter school regulation does not seem to be addressing these issues. Almost all state charter school laws include anti-discrimination clauses much like the regulations for traditional public schools (TPS's) (Kahlenberg, 2000). Moreover, many charter schools encourage the enrollment of “at-risk” populations as part of their charter, without specifying what “at-risk” means (Kahlenberg, et al., 2000). State legislators and school district officials rarely monitor the racial balance of charter schools. This “laissez-faire” attitude of governing bodies towards charter schools is fundamental to the school choice movement, but critics fear that it will create further stratification among races, ethnicities and different socioeconomic statuses (Kahlenberg, et al., 2000). In most states, school choice is an urban occurrence serving mostly low-income students of color. Studies have found that some charters enroll mostly White students and students from higher socioeconomic statuses (Kahlenberg, et al., 2000;

Frankenberg, et al., 2003; Orfield, 2003). In these cases, White students are attending schools with a disproportionate White population (Frankenberg et al., 2003). As an example, “in Illinois, Texas, and Ohio, where less than one in four charter school students is white, the average white charter student attends a school where more than 50% of the student body is white” (Frankenberg, et al., p. 35, 2003). This example could be extrapolated to mean that although few White students attend charter schools, the charters they do attend have majority White populations. Clearly, racial and socioeconomic segregation is a growing issue.

Although research is finding that charter schools are on average segregated by race, parents surveyed have expressed a desire to provide a diverse education for their children. Eighty percent of African American parents surveyed in a study said that it is very important to racially integrate schools, while 66% of White parents said the same (Kahlenberg, et al., 2000). In terms of sending their child to a charter school, parents undoubtedly have a myriad of reasons specific to their circumstances. Parents who enroll their students in charter schools are more likely to be motivated towards providing a stronger education for their child (Frankenberg, et al., 2003; Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin, Branch, & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2005). They are also more likely to be from a low socioeconomic bracket, although not the lowest or most poverty ridden (Cooper, et al., 2000). Additionally, if a charter school is of poor quality, a parent from a lower income bracket is less likely to withdraw their child from the school than a parent from a higher income bracket (Hanushek, et al., 2005). To elaborate, a family from a higher income bracket may have more “social capital”, or resources to draw on in times

of need. These might include well-connected professionals, the monetary means to make adjustments, or connections to community associations (Friedland & Sirianni, n.d.). This social capital may provide the higher-income family with more resources to draw upon to solve this issue, which allows them to more easily withdraw their student from the charter school. Thus, parent choice plays a large role in the continued segregation of charter schools, but also the success of the “choice” element in the school choice movement.

Considering these parental attitudes, school districts around the country would in fact be “less racially segregated if all children living in a school district attended their neighborhood schools” (Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). Saporito and Sohoni (2006) also found that White families are more likely to send their children to schools that are not integrated racially and not the local public school. However, Black students are more likely to attend these same “integrated” public schools than their White peers. This same study shows that, where public schools are racially diverse, White students are leaving at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups (Saporito & Sohoni, 2006).

The continued racial segregation in charter schools has multidimensional causes. Importantly, it has been suggested that charter schools have increased freedom, and that there is a cyclical relationship between the autonomy charters face and the lax attitudes of school officials and legislators (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). It has even been posited that educators and legislators are using charter schools as the go-to solution for problems in TPS’s, and in conjunction they avoid fixing the issue of segregation in charter schools (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). As discussed in the chapter on academic achievement in charter schools, these students may or may not be benefiting

from their continued separation from TPS's, and decision-makers have the opportunity to take charge of this disparity.

In terms of students of color in general, research has found that racial segregation in charter schools is due both to "White flight" and to the "self-isolation" of students of color (Garcia, 2008). Garcia (2008) also found that racial segregation presents differently in elementary schools versus high schools, and that choosers of elementary charter schools usually leave less segregated TPS's for more segregated charters. In contrast, charter high schools in the area studied had more "at-risk" students than elementary charter schools in the same area; these at-risk students were found to be mostly students of color (Garcia, 2008). Overall, increments of segregation found by Garcia (2008) differed by grade level in the area studied.

Although African American students are overrepresented in charter schools nationwide (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003), the racial segregation of Latina/o students is increasingly important. Latinos are the fastest growing minority in the United States (citation needed), and they are attending charter schools in large numbers. However, patterns of segregation between White and Latino students are more profound than between White and Black students, according to Saporito and Sohoni (2006). Their study also found that the school choice movement and its alternatives in education are significantly contributing to the continued segregation of the Latino and White student populations. Where Black students chose to attend elementary charter schools with a higher percentage of Black students than the schools they exited, Hispanic students chose to attend charter schools with smaller populations of Hispanic students than the schools

they left (Garcia, 2008). English Language Learners (ELL's) are also seriously underrepresented in charter schools, according to Orfield (2003) and the Harvard Civil Rights Research Project. ELL's are frequently Latino students (Orfield, 2003), and their lack of representation in charter schools suggests that they are being weeded out due to their low scores, historically, on nationally mandated achievement tests (Orfield, 2003). Importantly, Frankenberg and Lee (2003) found a mixed pattern of segregation for Latinos in charter schools, and the research on the segregation of Latinos in charter schools has gaps that should be studied.

The benefits of desegregating charter schools specifically remains to be studied. However, other research has found significant benefits for the students who attend racially balanced schools. Cooper, et al. (2000) posit that the long term effects of school desegregation for African Americans are that they have higher occupational goals, and they thoroughly understood the steps needed to achieve those goals. This is compared to students from all-Black schools that lacked this expertise. In addition, African American students from racially integrated high schools were more likely to hold white-collar jobs in diverse companies (Cooper, et al., 2000). (Need more info on desegregation benefits for other groups). Clearly, the benefits of desegregating charter schools cannot be understated, and while many of these alternative schools claim to have the best interests of "at-risk" students in mind, they may need to consider this important element of their educational settings.

Chapter v: Implications for Charter School Counselors

Although racial-ethnic separation in charter schools is a serious issue, little has been studied in terms of what charter school counselors can do to proactively ensure the success of their students. However, college-going attitudes and strategies have been researched in terms of charter schools and counselors. Since many charter schools educate students of color from low-income families, charter school students are likely to be first-generation college students (Farmer-Hinton & Garth McCullough, 2008). The college-promoting specifications in many schools' charters have been successful in sending at-risk students of color to college, including the KIPP academies and the Achievement First College Preparatory Charter School Network (Farmer-Hinton & Garth McCullough, 2008). Studies have shown that many students from these backgrounds rely on their high schools as the main resource for information about college applications, options, scholarships and more (A. Welton, personal communication, April 5, 2010; Farmer-Hinton & Garth McCullough, 2008). As autonomous, non-traditional public schools, charters have a significant opportunity to provide college guidance to their students, and to look to the example of those charters that have been successful in doing so.

In terms of African American students specifically, research has supported the conclusion that some Black communities are experiencing racial, economic and geographic isolation, with “low amounts of diversity in expertise, connections, resources and information” in their networks (Adams & Farmer-Hinton, 2006). Therefore, in these communities, the school, or in this case charter school, becomes the main source of social

capital. Charter school “agents” like counselors and teachers also have access to groups of adults with power and resources that can connect Black charter school students with opportunities. Thus, charter school counselors can use the culture-specific environment of their schools to provide students with resources for social mobility and increased success.

Charter school counselors have many additional avenues they can potentially cater towards their students. For instance, in order to address the racial-ethnic separation occurring at many charters, counselors may consider looking into free transportation for students outside the school’s surrounding area, creating the opportunity for more diversity at the school (Frankenberg, et al., 2003). Charter school counselors could also address racial-ethnic separation by encouraging their students to participate in diverse activities outside of school, and providing them the resources to do so. Also, with consideration of the political climate in the school, charter school counselors may want to address admission screening with their administrators (Orfield, 2003). As previously mentioned, many charter schools have lottery systems to choose students, or will “counsel out” students they don’t believe they can accommodate. Charter school counselors have the opportunity to encourage a diverse, equitable environment in their school and look for reasonable ways to accomplish diversity.

Counselors as a whole can be the vehicles for a caring, open community in their school. Providing for and welcoming all students in charter schools is essential in creating a healthy academic environment. Charter schools can especially focus on welcoming English Language Learners and special education students to encourage

diversity and fairness in their setting. As noted, these groups are underrepresented in charters (Orfield, 2003), and charter schools as a whole could benefit from including, welcome and fostering relationships with students from these groups.

Chapter vi: Further Research

Because charter schools have been around for just under two decades, research in the field is new and relatively lacking. For example, other than Black, White and Latino groups, it has not included the trends of various other racial groups attending charter schools (Garcia, 2008). Also, there is little research on the early years of the charter school movement and whether the school choice mantra of accountability was really demonstrated (Bracey & Arizona State University, 2005). Further research is also needed on the pattern of choices in terms of alternative schooling in the Latino community, as well as English Language Learners.

As mentioned, there is little to no research on racial and ethnic groups other than Black, White and Latino attending charter schools. Apparently, American Indian and Asian American students are attending charter schools in small numbers (Frankenberg, et al., 2003), but there is little information on their experience in charters as well as why they may have chosen to attend a charter school. Also, research has not been conducted on charter schools with specific missions other than serving at-risk students. Groups such as Arab Americans, Indian Americans, Brazilians, Alaskans, American Indians, Persian Americans and others are being educated in non-traditional public schools like charters but there is little to no information about their attendance or success.

Other than specific racial and ethnic groups in charter schools, the most important aspect of charter schools that has not been studied is the long-term success of charter school students. There is information about their college-going rates and their paths to get there (Farmer-Hinton & Garth McCullough, 2008), but there is little research on their

overall life success. By contrast, there exists a small body of longitudinal research on student life success in traditional public schools (TPS's) (Brown, K., Lichtenberger, E., Smalley, D., & Southern Illinois University, I., 2010). However, both educational arenas might need to be further examined in terms of students' outcomes of life success.

Besides academic achievements and scores on national tests, charter school students' careers, social success, success in relationships and overall accomplishments has not been studied. The question of whether charter school attendance benefits students in the long run may dictate whether the school choice movement has longevity in terms of an alternative in public education.

Chapter vii: Conclusion

In today's political climate, charter schools are sometimes touted as the new, innovative solution to failing public schools systems around the country. The idea of these free, semi-autonomous public educational institutes is currently drawing support from politicians, celebrities, educators, non-profit administrators and more. As an example, the documentary film "Waiting for 'Superman'" (Guggenheim, 2010) highlights charter schools as a possible solution to failing public schools, and has drawn attention from many political entities, including the Tea Party and President Barack Obama (Ali, 2010).

However, the very autonomy that makes the schools appealing may be some institutions' downfall. Lack of educational standardization and lack of regulation has led to varied educational results, and a clear trend of racial and ethnic separation in charter schools serving at-risk communities could be detrimental to today's students. Although these schools may be opportunities for growth for some students, for others they might be places of homogeneity in population and the same or worse level of academic success. Ultimately, more evidence is needed before charter schools can embody public official's claims as the new solution in public education.

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