

Copyright

by

Philip Adam Cortez

2017

The Dissertation Committee for Philip Adam Cortez certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Charter and Public School Perceptions and the Influence on Educational Public Policy

Committee:

Patricia A. Somers, Supervisor

Victor B. Saenz, Co-Supervisor

Ruben D. Olivarez

Elizabeth P. Garza

**Charter and Public School Perceptions and the Influence on
Educational Public Policy**

by

Philip Adam Cortez

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2017

Acknowledgements

The ability to complete a dissertation cannot be done alone. Many people over the last few years have all played a role in getting me to this point. Fellow students, program professors, colleagues, and family kept me focused on the goal, which is to earn this doctorate in order to help strength the knowledge base of the community. Education truly is the great equalizer.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” Philippians 4:13. My faith provided me with the strength to push through when I was tired or discouraged. This scripture from Philippians continues to guide me in all of my endeavors in life and I offer thanks to God.

I want to thank my family members. My mom, Rose, and dad, Willie, always ensured my brothers and I pursued the road to higher education. My mom reminded me of the importance of reading books as she has done all of her life. My dad taught me the value of hard work and giving back to the community. My brothers Will and Joseph were always there to provide me with a word of encouragement to complete this program. They will never know how much their positive encouragement influenced me while trying to climb this “mountain” of a project. My other family members to include my sisters-in-law, aunts, uncles, and cousins all offered me support and prayers and I thank each of you.

There were many fellow doctoral students both in the CSP and EPP programs who took me in as fellow UT family members. Whether we had classes together or completed group project over the years, I want to thank you. The list is far too long to list all of my classmates who gave me their friendship and I am truly blessed to have known

them. It was never goodbye at the end of each semester, it was always “see you soon fellow Longhorn.”

Members of my city council and state representative staffs have all offered me encouraging words and support since I started the doctoral program at UT Austin. My current team of Clarissa, Kady, George, Jim, and David, each day ask me “how’s your paper going?” and always pushed me to keep going. Ana Galindo, Tim, and Raul, from my city hall staff, helped during my first year in the program. To each of you I say thank you.

I want to thank all of the professors and advisors who provided me with the foundation upon which this dissertation is written. One advisor who I would like to single out is Hortensia Palomares. Hundreds of doctoral students in the Educational Leadership program at UT Austin have successfully navigated the maze of paperwork and requirements because of Hortensia. She always had time to talk, was friendly, and provided me critical guidance to completing the program. I could not have completed it without you Hortensia, and I’m sure I speak for hundreds of other doctoral students in expressing my deepest gratitude to you.

A great mentor of mine has been Dr. Pedro Reyes. Dr. Reyes is one of the most accomplished individuals walking the UT Austin campus. We are lucky to have someone of his caliber leading our program and recognizing the potential in all of us. Even while serving as president of the University of Texas at San Antonio, he always made time to talk to me and offer support. Thank you for accepting me into the Education Policy and Planning program Dr. Reyes, I will never forget your mentorship.

The final part of the doctoral program requires a team of professors to provide guidance and oversight. I want to thank each of my dissertation committee members for giving their time and efforts to complete this dissertation. Dr. Elizabeth Garza, thank you

for serving on my committee and thank you for our working lunch meetings at Bill Miller BBQ. You are doing outstanding work for Alamo Colleges students and I look forward to your continued successes.

Dr. Victor Saenz, thank you for your service on my committee and thank you for believing in empowering minorities, like me, to pursue paths in high education. You are personally changing the lives of Latinos throughout Texas and I would be honored to join you on your journey.

Dr. Ruben Olivarez, you have provided me the most guidance throughout this entire program. I have lost count of the number of meetings you and I have had and the number of times you would call to check on my progress. You allowed me to be dual enrolled in both CSP and EPP courses in order to widen my opportunities upon completion. Your friendship and mentorship has inspired me to teach our next generation of students. Whether serving as Superintendent of San Antonio ISD or serving as the CSP program director, you are a wonderful public servant and friend to students of all ages.

Last, but far from least, I want to thank my committee chair, Dr. Patricia Somers. It is because of you Dr. Somers that I am standing on the brink of earning my doctoral degree. You volunteered one blessed day to serve as my committee chair. I was having challenges over the last few years in completing my dissertation, but you cut through the static and focused me. You provided the structure, guidance, and friendship to complete this study. You have such a kind heart and a passion for issues influencing our community in Texas. I know you and I will work together in the future, and hopefully publish together, but I will miss our meetings. I always enjoyed our lunches together and am honored to complete the program with your name at the top of my committee. You are a great leader in the higher education community and I am proud to call you my Chairwoman.

Charter and Public School Perceptions and the Influence on Educational Public Policy

Philip Adam Cortez, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Patricia A. Somers

Co-Supervisor: Victor Saenz

The purpose of this study was to examine legislators' perceptions of the quality of education in public and charter schools, and the level of influence or impact their perceptions and experiences have on educational public policies in the Texas legislature. The research questions were: 1) To what extent do life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to educational public policy? 2) How do a legislator's perceptions and district demographics influence support or opposition to legislation on public and charter schools?

A qualitative methodology and Stone's urban regime theory (2015) were applied in this study. The data collection consisted of structured interviews with ten Texas state legislators from both urban and rural districts, and included members from both major political parties. The interview questions queried about perceptions and life experiences regarding public and charter schools. The data were coded and analyzed utilizing codes

presented by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Lofland (1971), and ranked based on frequency in the participating legislator's responses.

The findings for Research Question 1 analyzed the major themes of life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators and their influence on state legislators' perceptions of public and charter schools. The theme with the highest influence was life experiences, while the second strongest theme influencing their perceptions was background. Political Ideology was the theme least influencing a legislator's perceptions of public and charter school educational public policies.

The findings for Research Question 2 identified the level of influence of two themes, settings and perceptions, on a legislator's support of public and charter school legislative bills. The theme of settings had the highest influence for support or opposition to the legislative bills HB 21, SB 1882, and the HB 21 Amendment. The second strongest theme influencing a legislator's support or opposition to public and charter school bills was perceptions.

This study provided an insight into what impacts or influences a legislator's decisions on educational public policy. This study was unique in that it provided insight into the thought process of public officials, with questions focusing on personal background and life experiences.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction to Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Significance of the Research.....	3
Overview of Methodology.....	4
Summary.....	4
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	6
Charter School History in Texas.....	6
Public School History in Texas.....	13
School Vouchers.....	23
Literature Review Summary.....	31
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	33
Problem Statement.....	33
Research Questions.....	33
Analytical Paradigm.....	34
Theoretical Framework.....	34
Reasons for a Qualitative Study.....	35
Sources of Data.....	36
Participants.....	37
Institutional Review Board Approval Process.....	38

Data Coding.....	39
Trustworthiness.....	39
Positionality and Bias.....	40
Data Quality and Confirmability.....	41
Summary.....	41
Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Research Question 1	43
Themes.....	43
Table 1: Theme.....	44
Life Experiences.....	45
Background.....	53
Political Ideology.....	65
Table 2: Political Ideology.....	68
Chapter 4 Summary.....	80
Chapter 5: Data Analysis, Research Question 2.....	81
Table 1: Theme.....	82
Urban Regime Theory.....	82
Influence of Settings.....	83
Perceptions.....	93
Chapter 5 Summary.....	111
Chapter 6: Overarching Analysis.....	112
The “Other” Themes.....	112
Comparisons.....	115

Table 3: Votes.....	116
Republican vs. Democrat-School Choice.....	116
Republican vs. Democrat-School Vouchers.....	118
Cooperation between Public and Charter Schools.....	118
Overarching Trends Summary.....	119
Chapter 7: Summary of Findings, Influence, and Further Recommendations.....	120
Purpose of the Study.....	120
Research Questions.....	120
Overview of Methodology.....	121
Limitations.....	122
Summary of Findings- Research Question 1.....	123
Summary of Findings- Research Question 2.....	126
Literature Review.....	129
Recommendations for Additional Research.....	130
Recommendations for Educators.....	131
Recommendations for Policy Makers.....	132
Conclusion.....	132
Appendices.....	134
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	134
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Request.....	135
References.....	136

List of Tables

Table 1:	Themes	44
Table 2:	Political Ideology.....	68
Table 1:	Themes	82
Table 3:	Votes	116

Chapter 1

The vexed notion of school choice in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) education stirs emotions and passionate debates for parents, school administrators, legislators, and the larger community. What is the reason for this debate? The debate is over perceived quality differences depictions between public and charter schools. One reason is public perception, community discourse, and media tend to present a more favorable opinion of both private and charter schools and their corresponding curricular and accountability standards (Public Agenda Poll, 1999). This perception might lead to the election of state legislators who hold these views and perceptions of public, private, and charter schools. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) reported that private school students scored higher on standardized achievement tests and that private high schools had higher graduation requirements than public schools. The report also asserted that private school graduates were more likely to complete a baccalaureate degree than their public school counterparts. Reports from the Department of Education and various polls all contributed to school vouchers and school choice being hotly debated in the 85th Legislative Session.

Legislators and their constituents familiar with this research may ask why the outcomes are different for public and private/charter school students. Public schools receive state funds and local tax revenue. They can benefit from a bond giving hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements for public schools. States develop the standards for testing and accountability and monitor the outcomes. Taxpayers elect the members of the school boards that adopt a budget for each school, design outcomes,

and monitor financial and academic results. These extensive oversight, accountability, and financial capabilities suggest that public schools should be the most effective educational choice for the children of every community.

The non-profit organization Public Agenda surveyed parents about school choice. “By a margin of nine to one, parents believed they should have the right to choose their child’s school” (“On Thin Ice,” 1999, p. 1). Another question was: “Do you believe that public or private schools generally provide a better education?” Fifty-two percent of those polled perceived that private schools provided a better education than public schools. The survey also asked: “Do you believe that public or private schools do a better job teaching academic skills?” Fifty-three percent reported that private schools did a better job teaching these skills. Among other questions was: “Do you believe that public or private schools do a better job maintaining discipline and order?” Seventy-four percent said that private schools do a better job maintaining discipline and order.

As reflected in the Public Agenda poll, parents’ perceptions of public and private institutions tended to be more positive about private schools. Although many other factors affect the educational outcomes of a student, academic skills, discipline, and order are the foundations for long-term educational goals. End-of-year school testing is an outcome employed indicator used by many states, including Texas, to measure student progress in classes such as reading, science, and mathematics. While scholars, parents, and administrators debate the veracity and reliability of year-end, high-stakes testing, it is one of the standard measures educators at public and private K-12 schools use to assess student outcomes and overall school quality.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine legislators' perceptions of the quality of education in public and charter schools, specifically the narrative of higher accountability standards and academic achievements in charter educational institutions. What influences policy makers' perceptions of charter and public schools and what outcomes are results on legislative votes? Given the advantages of the public-school system (i.e., direct election of representatives, bonding authority), the academic performance of its students should theoretically outpace students in charter institutions. The current debate regarding the funding of public education in Texas has many legislators at odds over the introduction of school vouchers for parents use at the school of their choice.

Research Questions

The research questions were: 1) To what extent do life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to educational public policy? 2) How do a legislator's perceptions and district demographics influence support or opposition to legislation on public and charter schools?

Significance of the Research

This research is important because it may reveal the thought process and motivations for educational policies introduced and voted on by legislators. In order for a community to understand the motives and direction of public and charter school funding and structure in Texas, a comprehensive research project examining various background and experiences and their influence on state legislators is needed.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach that addressed the research questions. The study consisted of structured interviews with 10 Texas state legislators. The participants represented both urban and rural districts and included members from both major political parties. The interview questions queried about perceptions, life experiences and feelings about the educational direction of public and charter schools. The interview questions asked about the legislator's district demographics, and community perceptions of the public and charter school systems.

The second source of data was a review of three legislative bills impacting public schools, charter schools, and school vouchers (amendment) during the 85th Legislative Session. Authors of the legislation were not participants in this study. The three bills were: House Bill 21 regarding the funding of primary and secondary education, Senate Bill 1882 regarding a traditional independent school district (ISD) partnering with a charter school, and HB 21-Amendment instructing conference committee members to consider all methods of education choice and financing for special needs children. The third data source was field notes and interview transcripts.

Summary

Many of the public perceptions of both institutions are not entirely factual, and public and charter institutions may have more in common than many state legislators would like to believe and/or admit. The theoretical framework guiding this study is Stone's (1989) regime theory, which focuses on the interaction between public officials, residents, and administrators, and their decisions and agendas for schools. The three

foundations of Regime theory are governance, power, and leadership. A key question from the Regime theory is how do public officials, school administrators, and civic leaders interact? The interactions between the three stakeholders had broad repercussions for the types of education public policies introduced during the legislative session. The participating legislators discussed how their background, life experiences, and perceptions helped form public policies. This study determined the level of influence for each.

Today legislators are facing difficult decisions concerning their goal of giving children in their district a strong educational foundation. Legislators' perceptions and views about public and charter schools ultimately lead to numerous bills being filed to strengthen funding and support of all types of educational institutions. Is the long-term educational success of a child based on the life experiences and perceptions of policy makers in Texas? Does the current debate on the need for vouchers for school choice truly forecast whether a child is successful in school or in the future in the state of Texas? Parents and students are counting on legislators to sort through these issues during the legislative session and it is important to find out how and why certain public and/or charter school bills are successful while others continue to fail.

The study includes this introduction (Chapter 1), a review of literature (Chapter 2), a discussion of research methods (Chapter 3), two data analysis chapters (Chapter 4 and 5), an overarching analysis (Chapter 6), a summary/conclusion (Chapter 7), and an appendix. The data chapters discussed the findings, with future recommendations for educators and policymakers included in the final chapter.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the research on public and charter schools and their history, performance, and accountability standards. The history of public and charter schools in Texas provided details about the establishment of both types of schools in Texas. School vouchers and their history and performance throughout the nation are reviewed. School vouchers were debated at length during the 85th Legislative Session and the performance of voucher programs throughout the nation (to include litigation to stop them) are analyzed, and then contrasted with the viewpoints of legislators.

History of Charter Schools in Texas

The origins of charter schools in Texas began with the establishment of 20 charter schools in 1995 (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) website states that “charter schools are subject to fewer state laws than public schools in order to encourage more innovation and flexibility” (Charter Schools, para. 3). According to TEA (2017), there are four types of charter schools in Texas. The first is the Home Rule School District Charters (none currently in operation in Texas). The second type is Campus or Campus Program Charters in which independent school districts have oversight of the charters. The third and most common type of charter school in Texas is the Open-enrollment Charter, which means any student can apply and discrimination is prohibited. The fourth type involves a charter given to a two or four-year public college or university. TEA highlights how the flexibility of charters can lead to greater innovation. Parents wanting to “opt-out” of the traditional public school system in order for their child to succeed in a different educational environment may refer to this

description as a motivation to establish a voucher program in Texas. In addition, any parent visiting the TEA website can begin forming an opinion on the strengths of charter school versus public school.

Penning and Slate (2011) analyzed “the literature regarding charter schools in the State of Texas, the evolution of the charter school movement in Texas, and reviewed data regarding the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of charter schools in Texas” (p. 1). The authors discussed the rapid growth of charter(s) in Texas ranging from 20 open-enrollment charter schools in 1996 to 252 charter schools serving over 106,000 students in 2008. As part of their overview, the authors found, “when comparing total percentages of minorities in charter schools with traditional public schools, charter schools’ figures stand out” (p. 2). Latino students make up 48% of enrollment at charters, Black students at 42%, and white students at 18%. The figures indicated charter schools had a higher enrollment of economically disadvantaged students (72.1%), special education students (12.5%), and “at-risk” students (71.3%). This article confirmed the diversity of charter school enrollments.

Barden and Lassmann (2016) researched “whether or not charter schools are a viable option for Texas students in their area” (p. 291). They identified education reform as a pressing national issue, with publically controlled charter schools leading the reform methods. They quoted Cowen (2008), who said the “charter school option allows students to receive state-mandated education without the bureaucracy, hierarchy, and authoritative rule of the traditional public school” (p. 291). The authors observed that charter schools

are held to the same laws in regards to non-discrimination practices, health, and safety regulations.

According to Barden and Lassmann, the state funding per student is set, because in contrast to public schools the charter schools cannot tax the citizens and cannot take out loans (p. 292). The demographics indicated that 61% of all charter schools in Texas are located in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, and San Antonio. This study also highlighted that charter schools had a higher percentage of minority and at-risk students enrolled. The authors attributed this to the original mission of many charter schools to educate at-risk students. The academic outcomes for students in charter schools do “not seem as if all students benefit academically from attending a charter school versus a public school” (p. 296). The authors report that at-risk and minority students at charter schools have higher graduation and retention rates when compared to traditional public schools. With the diversity of the demographics in Texas, the popularity of charter schools may grow.

Vasquez Heilig, Holme, LeClair, Redd, and Ward (2016) began with a reference to the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In a unanimous ruling, SCOTUS wrote that, “In the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (p. 253). The authors examined the influence of charters schools on the legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the extent to which charters serve high-need populations such as special education, low-income, and English language students. A statewide analysis compared charter school and public school district demographics by locality, comparison

of levels of segregation of those populations, and “analyses to better understand high-need student’s demographic patterns within the footprint of a large urban district to evaluate the extent to which students with greater than average instructional needs are served by charter schools in equal proportion to the neighboring public schools” (p. 256).

As the authors noted, advocates of charter schools use data showing that charters “serve higher percentages of low-income students, and higher proportions of African American and Latino students, than traditional public schools” (p. 256). A reference to a recent report by The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2012) highlighted “a greater percentage of low-income students (46% versus 41%), Black and Latino students (27% versus 15% and 26% versus 22%) and students who perform lower on standardized assessments before transferring to charter school’s percentages” (p. 257).

The results of the analysis by the authors showed that high-need student enrollment in charter schools disproves the claim by charter advocates that they are serving disadvantaged students at the same rates as public schools. Their quantitative findings raised questions regarding the influence on public schools by charters regarding the increased voluntary enrollment of high-need students at public schools. Charters “attract larger proportions of students who are easier to serve, and as a result nearby traditional public schools are left with an even higher concentration of high-needs students” (p. 279). Vasquez Heilig et al. showed that charters can choose their students and that families cannot. This contradicts *Brown v. Board of Education*, which determined that segregation of public schools was unconstitutional. The political process

at the Texas legislature can change the laws affecting charter schools and mandate increased accountability and accessibility.

Wei, Patel, and Young (2014) used survey data from 2,273 teachers in Texas to examine the differences in schools “that contribute to the experiences (e.g., working conditions, instruction and student engagement in learning, self-efficacy and job satisfaction, and teacher evaluation) of teachers from both charter and public schools” (p. 1). The structure of an educational institution is important because of the many resources (teaching skills workshops and support) that are provided to teachers and administrators. Opportunities for freedom to teach and a relief from many of the laws and regulation of traditional public schools should result in a higher sense of satisfaction or achievement of teachers at charter schools. The Wei et al. study is important because it opens the “black box” of the day-to-day opportunities for both types of educational institutions.

A goal in this study was to provide data to school leaders and public policymakers, which could help “strategically focus efforts on addressing workplace conditions that may underline teacher retention and student achievement, and represent unmet needs among teachers” (p. 3). Teachers who choose to teach at a charter school have backgrounds that differ from those who choose traditional public schools. This is important because of the direct correlation between highly skilled teachers and student achievement. The authors cite studies showing that charter schoolteachers tend to be less experienced, younger, minorities, have fewer advanced degrees, and have higher turnover rates as compared to traditional public school teachers. The appeal of flexibility in

teaching smaller classes, educational philosophy, and charter school missions increase the appeal to teach at charter schools.

The conclusions of Wei, Patel, and Young (2014) focused on the structure and support system in place for both charter and public school teachers. They highlighted that charter school teachers reported “a more supportive teaching environment, higher expectations of students among staff, a greater sense of responsibility for student learning, and higher levels of student engagement in learning” (p. 19). Some of the areas where charter schoolteachers voiced concerns focused on “less access to high quality professional development, less collaboration with colleagues, and perceived the teacher evaluation system as less fair in comparison to similar teachers in traditional public schools” (p. 20). The authors recommended that charter schools provide more instructional support and professional development opportunities.

A study by Cowen, Fleming, and Gofen (2008) examined the reasons sponsors open a charter school. There is an assumption that a pool of potential charter school founders exists and that establishment of a charter school is accomplished by the force of will of the sponsors. The research questions of the study were: “(1) What types of organizations seek to sponsor charter schools? (2) How can we assess the motivation of charter sponsors in policy relevant terms? (3) Does motivation itself vary systemically with the schools’ observable characteristics?” (p. 130).

As cited by Cowen, Fleming, and Gofen, individuals wanting to establish a charter school said that their two primary motivations in the creation of a school were “to support a new vision of education that was unavailable in the local school system and to

serve a specific population” (p. 131). Examples given are the charter sponsor, Rylie Faith Family Academy, which was formed “by the members of the community who are concerned about the children’s education” (p. 133) and sponsoring organizations that run charter schools and offer foster care services. The second charter school example was to target student populations with special needs. This reinforces that one of the most important motivations in establishing a charter school is to serve a specific population.

A charter school sponsor may also be motivated by an educational philosophy such as Montessori or Dewey, which are not traditionally used in public school systems.

The authors summarized

six types of sponsors: (1) those who functioned only to operate a single charter school, often through a particular educational philosophy; (2) those who functioned to provide other social services; (3) education-centric organizations that ran several charter schools, either within a particular locality or across the state; (4) organizations offering other services but also running several charters; (5) independent school districts that converted their traditional schools to charter schools; and (6) nationwide partners operating in Texas. (p. 135)

The authors concluded that sponsors who identified themselves as serving at-risk students met their goals of enrolling higher percentages of at-risk students. They found that service-based sponsors met a need in Texas by educating students who face challenges other students don’t have. These six types of sponsors are leading the efforts to expand charter schools in Texas. It is imperative to ensure equal access to these types of charter schools for all students regardless of socio-economic status. As shown in the study, sponsors have various reasons for the formation of charter schools and many have stated the objective of serving at-risk students.

Public School History in Texas

The history of public schools in Texas begin with the Texas Declaration of Independence (1836) which said that the failure of the Mexican government to “establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources” was one of the reasons for declaring independence and severing ties with Mexico (“An Overview of the History of Public Education in Texas,” 2017). Texas Education Agency asserts that information regarding the first “Anglo-American public school law” enacted in 1840. The funding for public schools started with the Texas legislature allocating one-tenth of the annual state tax to fund public schools. This served as a blueprint for the establishment of the Permanent School Fund (PSF), which provided \$765 million a year to local school districts. As described by TEA, the passage of various laws gave more authority to the cities and towns to administer and enhance their schools. The number of school districts grew from 526 in 1900 to over 1,000 independent school districts in Texas today. The first example of school accountability happened in 1885, when “a system of accreditation was created in 1885 when high schools were sent selected test papers for examination by the faculty of the University of Texas” (“An Overview of the History of Public Education in Texas,” para. 1). Students passing the test papers were given automatic admission to the university.

The State of Texas continued to expand its reach into the local school districts. More funding was provided for textbooks, teacher salaries, and funding to children attending schools in the rural parts of Texas. Further reform of the education system occurred in 1949 with the passage of the Gilmer-Aikin laws that facilitated the

distribution of state funds, reorganized TEA, and created an elected body to oversee the administration of public education. Numerous other legislative reform bills have helped shape the current funding and accountability system to include House Bill 72 (1984), which gave pay raise for teachers, revised the school finance model, and included numerous academic reform measures. Senate Bill 1 (1995) “stripped the education code of several state-mandated rules and returned more authority to local school districts, gave the governor power to appoint the education commissioner, and gave the State Board of Education the authority to grant open-enrollment charter schools.” With the passage of Senate Bill 1, the debate regarding the performance of charter and public schools commenced.

Howell (2004) examined the historical role early Texas counties played in the formation of the public school system and how Henderson County was one of the few counties to support public education between 1850 thru 1870. In Howell’s review of early Texas history and the role of public education in the revolt against the Mexican government, he described an effort to establish a public education system through the Constitution of the free state of Coahuila y Tejas. Howell reviewed the constitution of Coahuilia y Tejas using the publication Gammel (1898) and describes how “a competent number of common schools were to be established in all the towns of the State” (p. 451). This Constitution of the free state of Coahuila y Tejas demonstrated that early settlers thought a public school system was important.

Early settlers of Texas also included a statement in the constitution about how the “method of instruction would be uniform throughout the State and that the State was

empowered to form a general plan for public instruction and to regulate by means of statutes and laws” (Gammel, p. 451) After independence from Mexico, the newly formed Republic of Texas stated in the Constitution that “it shall be the duty of Congress, as soon as circumstances will permit, to provide by law a general system of education” (p. 1079). The form of financial support provided to the schools in early Texas was furnished by the “taxation on property” and the establishment of “perpetual fund or common school fund” (p. 1297).

The main point of Howell’s article was that the State’s commitment and continuous funding of the public schools in Henderson County during a time (1850-1870) when few public documents described the practice. State funding of public schools is part of the foundation and history of the state of Texas. While some modern-day school reform activists campaign against the increase of funding for public schools, history shows that the establishment and state support of public schools played a key role in Texas history.

Preuss (2009) described the life of A.M. Aikin who is recognized as “Father of Modern Texas Education” due to his over forty years serving in the Legislature and sponsoring of over 150 education bills. Preuss quotes Aikin remarking, “Until all young Texas have the more or less equal chance to show their skills and develop their talents, whether black or Mexican American or white Anglo, we won’t have finished the long road that our forefathers set before us” (p. 17). This quotation demonstrates the efforts of a Texas leader who recognized the importance of a public school system, in which all Texans without regard to skin color have access to a quality education. Senator Aikin’s

name is on three Gilmer-Aikin laws (Senate Bill 115, Senate Bill 116, and Senate Bill 117), which reformed the Texas education system from top-to-bottom. Some of the important reforms of the Gilmer-Aikin laws ensured that teachers “salaries be raised without regard to sex or race, elevated the role of the state in what had been a heretofore a local responsibility, and increased the amount of money the state spent on education” (p. 17).

Aikin’s role in reforming the public school system in Texas stemmed from his recognition that rural Texans could no longer continue to match the quality of education provided by urban areas. The origin of modern-day education reforms started with a debate about increasing salaries of teachers. The state legislature determined it was time to conduct a full review of the public school system in Texas. However, in 1906 Governor Jester refused to sign a funding bill until this review was conducted. State Representative Claud Gilmer and Senator A.M. Aikin both sponsored the legislation for this review, thus leading to the naming of the committee-Gilmer-Aikin Committee (p. 19). Upon completion of this review, rural school districts benefited from Aikin’s “new rural education progressivism” and a *Houston Post* editorial eulogizing him stated, “young Texans are studying in the universities and graduate schools of the state and across the nation because of public school preparation envisioned and shaped by Senator A.M. Aikin Jr” (p. 23).

Both public and charter schools highlight their education of minority populations as a justification for increased allocation of funds. African American and Latino students have faced numerous challenges in the history of Texas public education. Morowski and

Davis (2005) reviewed the slow expansion of public education for African American students in Texas during the early part of the 20th century. The authors pointed out that “whereas the American high school movement gained momentum in the early twentieth century, public secondary education for Black students in the American South only very slowly became available” (p. 183).

TEA reports reviewed information on the high schools for White youth, but little information on the high schools attended by African American and Latino students. Another issue was the absence of libraries in minority schools and the “disproportionately small share of available educational funds” from the State of Texas for minority students. This lack of funding and support from the state led to the establishment of less than four public high schools in the urban areas for African American students. The authors described how the situation improved during the 1920’s with the creation of some county training schools. The training school used the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education developed by Booker T. Washington, which was promoted throughout the South (Knox, 1940, p. 449).

Morowski and Davis provided details on the initial educational offerings of these schools, which consisted of a combination of traditional studies, combined with manual and vocational training. Texas’ first county training schools received “a total of \$1,350 from the General Education Board and by 1930, 30 counties reported having county training schools” (p. 185). Traditional four-year high schools for African American students continued to promote learning, which prepared those students for collegiate studies. In 1921, the Texas State Department of Education published accreditation

standards, which would allow African American students the opportunity to enter college without the need to take an entrance exam. Although the number of colleges they could attend was limited. The research by the authors helped to “identify 129 individual high schools that existed in Texas during the 1900-1930 period, which provided increased educational opportunities for Black students” (p. 186).

Texas achieved a very small goal in the history of public school education for African American students with the creation of three county training schools. Although Texas subscribed to the practice of segregated educational institutions, community leaders in rural and urban Texas were not deterred from providing African American students with academic and vocational training. In the modern-day debate about charter schools, a compelling reason for the establishment of charters, was community leaders’ concerted efforts to serve African American and Hispanic communities.

In an editorial titled “Vouchers, choice advocates take hit in new reports,” the American School Board Journal (2007) discussed the effectiveness of school choice programs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C. They referred to a report by the Government Accountability Office which examined the performance of 12th graders in public and private high schools. The editorial noted that the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program did not verify whether the 58-participating OSP parochial and private schools were accredited. If an academic institution is not accredited, then any results produced by their students would be scrutinized and possibly disregarded.

Bliss (2006) examined the Opportunity Scholarship Program in Florida. Between 50-75% of the students receiving scholarships (McKay Scholarships, Corporate Tax

Credits, and Opportunity Scholarship) were minority students. The Florida school choice program was introduced in 1999 and currently almost 300,000 children (from pre-K through college) have used the publicly funded choice programs. This demonstrates the popularity of the voucher schools. Former Governor Jeb Bush introduced the “A+ Plan” which graded schools on an A-F scale determined by the student scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment test.

Bliss highlighted that any innovation regarding school choice “faces pressures from established lobbies, state departments of education, the media and various other state and national organizations” (p. 1). The Florida voucher program was met with hostility from special interest groups. On January 5, 2006, the Florida Supreme Court (*Bush v. Holmes*) ruled that the publicly funded OSP was unconstitutional (Bliss, 2006). Before it was ruled unconstitutional, the voucher program in Florida was one of the few in the nation to have the statutory authority to review outcome data.

Barrow and Rouse (2006) explored why “children from low income families attain less education than children from more advantaged families” (p. 100). They found that socioeconomic status influenced high school graduation rates and test results. Rouse and Barrow asserted that access to quality schools was connected to the failure to achieve academic goals for low-income families. As a result, “U.S. public schools tend to reinforce the transmission of low socioeconomic status from parents to children” (p. 2). The authors recommended attracting and retaining high quality teachers as a starting point in equalizing school quality. They reported that a child’s background must be examined to determine the influence on his or her educational goals and attainment.

Davis and Robelen (2004) highlighted the influence of political parties on the passage of school voucher and accountability reforms. With more Republicans winning statehouse seats, the authors suggested various educational reforms and publicly funded vouchers might have less-resistance than in other states. Private school vouchers have always been hotly debated and only a handful of states have adopted public-funded voucher programs. Politicians from both major parties tend to make vouchers the centerpiece of their campaigns and this can cause an emotional outcry from the general public. This opposition can lead to defeat for some legislators because of feelings about vouchers.

Glenn (2006) described the results of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), which showed that “public schools are comparable to private schools” (p. 1). Glenn reported that as a result, some researchers concluded that Catholic schools were more effective at closing the achievement gap and that the successes produced by Catholic and private schools stemmed from the fact that “millions of parents want them” (p. 2). Glenn cited the U.N.’s *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1948) to show that parents have a right to choose an education for their children, to include Catholic and private schools. Glenn argued that a limit on a parent’s resources should not be the determining factor as to whether a child receives a quality education. The issue of school distinctiveness was reviewed to determine whether keeping the autonomy of private/religious schools should be taken into account in the publicly funded voucher debate. The article overall reflected that school choice is based on various distinctive differences among schools and not just on academic frameworks.

Harrison (2005) discussed the various approaches taken by the U.S government to regulate educational institutions and reviewed the free market approach to educational accountability. Harrison described a free market approach toward educational institutions in which parents hold ultimate authority (through selection of the school's principal) in the school's academic performance, which leads to competition among schools. This economic approach would create a sense of pride of ownership in each school for the parents and lead to the reform of the school board politics that shape many educational debates in public education.

Adams and Hill (2006) focused on "those that favor and oppose total free markets in education" (p. 217). They discussed a modern alternative, which would involve a combination of private and public accountability tools and would provide the government with a role in terms of licensing and ensuring a constant flow of data on academic achievements. The authors introduced the idea that "a regulated model would mix government regulation, options for families and entrepreneurship on the supply side" (p. 217).

Goldstein (2003) described the publicly funded voucher program and the views of parents whose disabled children used Florida vouchers. Schools participating in the McKay Scholarship program offered greater educational advantages over the child's previous school. The benefits listed by the parents included: reduced student-to-teacher class size ratios, increased accountability of teachers and less ridicule from peers in their child's class. The study was conducted by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research

and examined the impact of the public-funded voucher program through the parent's point of view.

The survey reported, "92.7 percent of currently participating parents were satisfied with their children's McKay vouchers; while 32.7 percent were satisfied with the public schools their children had attended" (p. 1). Goldstein noted that some members of Congress rated the McKay Scholarship Program as a model of how publicly funded vouchers can help children succeed in achieving their academic goals. However, critics of the program argued that the parents lose their legal options if private schools are not meeting their obligations. The survey noted that 86 percent of those parents surveyed indicated "that their McKay schools provided all the services they promised" (p. 3).

Mann (1990) analyzed the need for school deregulation. Over 30 years ago, the issue of more public oversight/accountability was proposed. The modern controversy of "teaching to the test" can reduce accountability of teachers and place it solely on the shoulders of the school's superintendent. Mann proposed "giving teachers the flexibility to teach and the power to make decisions and that the freedom is conditioned on meeting public goals" (p. 1). Schools that do not meet the public standards would be closed and the remaining institutions would be forced to increase their academic output in standardized testing in order to compete in the deregulated markets. This would benefit the children by ensuring a healthy competition to determine which institution can help to better achieve their educational goals.

Gullatt and Ritter (2000) discussed the notion that in order for a state to be economically viable in the long term, the knowledge and skill base of the workforce must

be strengthened. The methods for accountability, which can lead to a stronger knowledge base, vary tremendously throughout the 50 states and thus can have a negative influence on the future growth of this country's economy. The authors discussed that private and parochial schools do not fall under state mandates for accountability. The national and state governments have attempted to require accountability measures to help ensure successful academic outcomes in the public school systems and school "report cards" have become a popular tool for presenting the school performance in a binary manner-good or bad. "By providing stakeholders and the general public with better information, lower performing schools will be spurred into improvement and greater accountability" according to Gullatt and Ritter (p. 29). School report cards and rankings can help improve accountability if a "best practice/ranking system can be identified and implemented on a more uniform method.

School Vouchers

The history of school vouchers is rooted in the belief that a parent should have the right to send their children and tax dollars to the school of their choice. If the local public school district is not a good fit for the child, then parents should be sent to the school of their choice. An argument can be made that a parent is paying double the "tuition" if a decision is made to send their child to a private or charter school. The amount sent to the local school district can be the highest portion of a property tax bill in Texas. More than half of a property tax bill is paid to the local school district. What if that amount were sent to the school of their choice? What would that do to the public schools? If the area of residence is in a lower income area of town, the effects of those tax dollars being moved

out of the district can be detrimental. The debate of school vouchers is growing in the state of Texas. The perception that some public schools are not providing a quality education has fueled the calls for the creation of a school voucher program in Texas.

The election of Dan Patrick as the Lieutenant Governor in Texas in 2014 has increased the effort to implement a school voucher program. Fikac (2017) described the determination of Patrick to promote vouchers during the 85th Legislative Session. “I never give up the fight,” stated Patrick. Fikac reported several concessions were to include limiting the proposed voucher program to only counties with a population of over 285,000 residents and a creation of a tax credit scholarship for families below a certain income level. The article also notes that the school voucher proposal is a “particularly tough sell with rural lawmakers who don’t see any benefit for their constituents since they don’t have as many private school options” (p. 3).

Fikac also reported that Patrick tried to attach the issue of children with disabilities having the opportunity to use a school voucher. “Many of the public schools are great. Most are good. But about 10 percent are failing. We need to help those parents in those failing schools and particularly parents with children with disabilities. We need to help them get in the right private or public or charter school,” stated Patrick (p. 3).

The issue of school vouchers in Texas ultimately failed during the 85th Legislative Session. Fikac notes “a number of Republicans joined Democrats in squelching the idea, which is opposed by those who see it as a drain on already-underfunded public schools” (p. 3). As noted in Fikac’s article, the support for school vouchers varied depending on the location and population levels of the districts.

One of the arguments for school vouchers is the possibility for the children of lower-income families in a low-revenue school district, to move to a better performing school. Gooden, Huriya, and Torres (2016) investigated “legal and political issues as they relate to school vouchers serving students of color” (p. 522). They note that in 2015, “a Texas voucher bill that would have allowed 16,000 public school students, mostly from urban districts, to transfer to private schools using tax dollars failed” (p. 522). The 2015 and 2017 rejection of school vouchers, points to a skeptical climate at the Texas Capitol. The authors also note that some state voucher efforts may be classified as key agenda items but ultimately do not pass.

Vouchers according to Gooden, Huriya, and Torres began as an effort to resist school desegregation in the 1950’s. According to the authors, the desegregation court order led the state of South Carolina to “approve a constitutional amendment eliminating the state’s duty to educate all children, thus allowing conversion to an all-private school system to avoid racial desegregation” (p. 524). Other states also passed “tuition grant” programs to avoid desegregation by closing down the public school system. Gooden, Jabbar, and Torres asserted that “the private school voucher movement was born” with the creation of these grant programs. (p. 524). The case of *Griffin et. al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1964) ended the voucher programs of that era. The authors concluded, “the Court found that the closing of public schools while simultaneously providing vouchers and tax concessions for private white-only academies, amounted to the clear denial of black children’s equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (*Griffin*, 1964, pp. 229-232).

Goeden, Huriya, and Torres highlighted a key argument made by proponents that school vouchers allow low-income families to escape a low performing school and have a chance for better opportunities at the school of their choice. However, they found that “vouchers are not likely to generate the deep and long-lasting changes needed in low-income and minority communities” (p. 534). The school voucher fight continues with the argument that school vouchers provide a more equitable opportunity for all students regardless of race or income levels to attend a “better” school of their choice.

The question of whether public monies can be allocated to a private school or charter school without open enrollment is an issue for both advocates and rival of school vouchers. Sutton and King (2011) analyzed the legal strategies for challenging vouchers. They began with a discussion of the Establishment Clause in regards to the allocation of public dollars to schools of religious organizations. The Establishment Clause is part of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibits the establishment of religion. School voucher opponents initially argued the allocation of public dollars for religious schools, violated the Establishment Clause. However, *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) “effectively eliminated federal barriers to voucher expansion” (p. 244). With the denial of the Establishment Clause as a barrier to state sponsored voucher programs, other legal arguments were developed by school voucher rivals. Sutton and King also listed the various clauses in state constitutions that might be legal tools for voucher litigation. They identified the Texas “no aid” clause which states, “no money shall be appropriated, or drawn from the treasury for the benefit of any sectarian or religious society, theological or religious seminary” (p. 251) as one such legal tool.

Sutton and King discussed the national history of school vouchers, noting that serious school voucher programs began in the 1990's. They provided examples from Wisconsin, Ohio, Arizona, Florida, Colorado, and Utah. The Florida Opportunity Scholarship Program (FOSP), created in 1999 by then-Governor Jeb Bush, was the only statewide voucher program in the nation and "provided tax-supported vouchers for students in low-performing schools for choice to enroll in secular or non-secular private schools" (p. 253). The Arizona legislature attempted to provide students with disabilities a scholarship to a qualified school of their choosing. The Arizona Scholarships for Pupils with Disabilities Program "allocated an amount equal to the base funding generated by each student within the state funding program" (p. 253). Arizona legislators also created the Displaced Pupils Choice Grant Program to "provide scholarships valued up to \$5000 for children in foster care to enroll in a nonpublic school" (p. 254). The Arizona State Supreme Court struck down the Arizona programs as violations of the state's "no aid" clause. This court decision provides school voucher opponents in Texas with a possible legal tool, to be used if a voucher program is passed in the state legislature.

The authors also discuss the use of the "uniformity clause" in a state's constitution as a viable legal argument against a state-sponsored school voucher program. The Florida Supreme Court "struck down the FOSP when it ruled on *Bush v. Holmes* (2006) which stated language in the state education clause requiring the legislature to provide a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high-quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high-quality education" (p. 259). The justices' stated, "the FOSP contravenes (state education uniformity) provisions because it allows some

children to receive a publicly funded education through an alternative system of private schools that are not subject to the uniformity requirement of the public system” (p. 260). The ruling by the Florida Supreme Court could provide a template for other states to challenge the constitutionality of school voucher programs under the uniformity clause.

The “local control” argument was used successfully by opponents of voucher programs in the state of Colorado that led to the voucher program being ruled unconstitutional. The authors noted that “local control” provision is not used as much as “uniformity clause” and the “no aid” clause in legal proceedings.

Sutton and King identified several anti-voucher arguments including the no aid clause, uniformity clause, and the local control clause. The creation and implementation of school voucher programs will be decided by each state’s courts and thus proponents and opponents must be prepared for the constitutional criteria legal fight.

Leal (2004) discussed Latino attitudes toward school vouchers using “a recent national survey primarily created to measure Latino policy and political opinions” (p. 1227). With Texas’ large Latino population, the survey is useful in analyzing minority community support for school voucher policies. The increased voting power of the Latino community cannot be ignored while campaigning for public office, particularly in Texas. The recognition of this influence is demonstrated by an increase of political campaigns crafting and purchasing ad, mailers, and outreach directed at the Latino vote.

Leal discussed the results of a 2001 poll by the Latino Coalition and the Hispanic Business Roundtable, which found “that 73 percent of Latinos expressed support for vouchers” (p. 1228). School voucher proponents could argue that there is a disconnect

between “minority politicians, mostly Democrats and voucher opponents, and minority communities, mostly Democrats but voucher supporters” (p. 1228). The counter-argument can begin with the results of various voucher ballot measures where Latinos have voted strongly against school voucher ballot measures specifically in California’s Proposition 38. This proposition was on the November 2000 ballot as a constitutional amendment and was titled “School Vouchers, State Funded Private and Religious Education. The proposition failed when 70 percent of California voters rejected the amendment.

Leal used the Washington Post/Henry J. Kaiser Family/Harvard University National Survey on Latinos in America (NSLA) (1999) to inform his study. This survey included 2,417 Latinos broken down into subgroups of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Americans and were considered the “most appropriate” by Leal because of the large sample size. The questions used in the NSLA survey were, “Do you favor or oppose offering government financial aid or ‘vouchers’ to pay parents some of the cost of sending their children to private or parochial schools, or haven’t you heard enough to say?” (p. 123) There were 15 independent variables with some examples being age, education level, income level, gender, partisanship, having children, and Latino heritage background.

The results of the NSLA survey when put into Leal’s regression model showed that “Latinos are statistically significant and positive and that Latinos are more likely to favor vouchers than are Anglos which is consistent with the previous claims that minorities, who are disproportionately located in districts with low-performing schools

are more likely to favor voucher programs” (p. 1235). Leal noted that income level and education level are statistically insignificant, which would eliminate the argument that lower-income status and education levels are more inclined to support school vouchers. Overall the survey showed that Latinos in the aggregate are more supportive of school vouchers than Anglos. Leal notes that when the results were broken down into sub-heritage groups, only Puerto Rican Latinos were in support of school vouchers, while Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans support for school vouchers was not statistically significant. With Leal’s results, a strategic argument can be made that Latinos overall are more open to the creation of school voucher programs.

An article by Eckes, Mead, and Ulm (2016) reviewed various school voucher statues and discussed the potential for “voucher programs to discriminate against marginalized groups (racial minorities, LGBT students, students with disabilities, religious minorities)” (p. 537). The ability of an educational institution to discriminate against certain groups of people while benefiting from the use of public tax dollars is a recipe for a legal challenge of a state’s school voucher program. The authors provided some examples of discrimination that can occur by schools participating in a state’s voucher program. The first example was in Georgia where some schools participating are “able to expel openly gay students and that as many as a third of the schools participating have strict antigay policies or adhere to a religious philosophy that holds homosexuality as immoral or sinful” (p. 537). The second example highlights the 2011 court case *ACLU v. Wisconsin* where the state’s school voucher program was shown to have students with special needs, underrepresented in some voucher programs.

Eckes, Mead, and Ulm reviewed school voucher statues in 15 states to examine whether they contained nondiscrimination rules or language. The authors found that “the policies do not uniformly demand that private participating voucher schools avoid discrimination and, none of the 26 policies reviewed comprehensively addresses discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, and disability” (p. 546). They found that all but four of the programs (Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, and Vermont) had an “explicit” provision that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race. None of the 15 states with school voucher programs protected LGBT students with “explicit” language addressing discrimination against LGBT students. Given the findings of the Eckes, Mead, and Ulm research, it is imperative that other states attempting to establish a school voucher program include nondiscrimination language in their laws to ensure no public tax dollars are used to discriminate against any student from any socio-economic background.

Literature Review Summary

This chapter reviewed the history of public and charter schools nationally and in Texas. A review of school vouchers provided an understanding of the at-times controversial program. The theoretical framework for this study, Stone’s (1989) regime theory, which focuses on the interaction between public officials, residents, and administrators, and their decisions and agendas for schools was presented. Legislators perceptions of public and charter schools and their interview protocol responses, combined with Stone’s regime theory, may provide an understanding of how educational policy is formed.

Policymakers have an important decision when it comes to the expansion of charter schools and possible creation of a school voucher program in Texas. It is imperative for each legislator to have a clear understanding of the history and origins and case law on public schools, charter schools, and voucher programs, before supporting or opposing legislation impacting all three.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the mechanics of the study, including problem statement, research questions, analytical paradigm, a discussion of methods, participants, sources of data, coding, analysis, data quality, and a summary. This study examined how various perceptions of public and charter schools influenced votes on educational bills proposed at the state legislature.

Problem Statement

This study examined legislators' perceptions of the quality of education in public and charter schools, specifically the narrative of higher accountability standards and academic achievements in charter educational institutions. What influences policy makers' perceptions of both charter and public schools? The current debate regarding the funding of public education in Texas has many legislators at odds over the possible introduction of school vouchers for parents use at the school of their choice. Given the perceptions of both types of schools, is certain legislation introduced at the state level to encourage or discourage school choice and school vouchers?

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were: 1) To what extent do life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to educational public policy? 2) How do a legislator's perceptions and district demographics influence support or opposition to legislation on public and charter schools?

Analytical Paradigm

The analytical paradigm for this study was interpretivism. This viewpoint was espoused by many philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant, and Dilthey (Willis, 2007). This theory was formulated on an individual's point of view and applied to each legislator who is interviewed. Each legislator has various viewpoints and interpretations on educational institutions and their effectiveness. Experiences can influence a person's point of view, which may produce different opinions and support for one type of school or another. The interviews of the state's leaders included questions on each legislator's previous experiences and background.

Edmonds (1979) observed that the success of a school was ultimately determined by the effectiveness and level of influence of its leadership. Edmonds also stressed that the socio-economic background of each child should not influence the student's academic performance and thus legislators should view a student as equal to any other student in other parts of the educational system and state. This research explored these questions, experiences, and perceptions, and presents their overall influence on educational public policies in Texas.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Stone's (2015) regime theory, which focuses on the interaction between public officials, residents, and administrators, and their roles on decisions and agendas for schools. The themes of 'governance versus government' (stakeholders within and outside governing institutions), power (exists at all levels of participation and must be collaborative), and leadership

(anyone who can inspire teamwork and build partnerships) are the three pillars of Stone's regime theory.

Shipp (2008) described regime theory as "invigorating the politics of education with fresh analytical opportunities" (p. 89). Regime theory analyzes the importance of governance and the role of "actors" such as elected officials and public administrators. This theory also discusses the importance of power both inside and outside of the educational institutions and the importance of leadership in shaping public policy agendas and building coalitions of support. The foundations of regime theory surfaced in the interview responses from legislators and provide an understanding of the role of governance, power, and leadership in the formulation of public policies influencing public and charter schools in Texas.

The interpretive lens coupled with regime theory provided a solid foundation of academic theories, which guided the research and answered the proposed research questions.

Reasons for a Qualitative Study

This study was qualitative because of the need for information on individual's viewpoints and experiences (Willis, 2007). This research explored if perceptions and past experiences influenced the outcomes (through public policy) of charter and public schools, by interviewing state policymakers. A qualitative study allowed for a more personal point of view on the development and implementation of educational public policy.

Sources of Data

Three sources of data were used in this research. The first source was interviews with 10 selected Texas state legislators. The interview protocol (Appendix A) focused on legislator's viewpoints and perceptions of public and charter schools, explored their influence, positive or negative, on educational public policy and legislative votes in the Texas House of Representatives.

The second source of data was a document review of the two public and charter school bills and one amendment that were introduced during the 85th Legislative Session. The three were: House Bill 21 (Huberty, 2017) regarding the funding of primary and secondary education, Senate Bill 1882 (Menendez, Koop, 2017) regarding a traditional ISD partnering with a charter school, and House Bill 21-Amendment (Simmons, 2017) instructing conference committee members to consider all methods of education choice and financing for special needs children. The vote count was reviewed to analyze the extent and influence of the nine themes on each of the voting legislators.

HB 21 by Representative Huberty increased funding for public schools by \$351 million dollars. Included with this increase were \$120 for both traditional public and charter schools for new facilities. Retired teachers also received \$212 million for the Teacher Retirement System with the goal of decreasing health care costs.

SB 1882 by Senator Menendez and Representative Koop encouraged cooperation between traditional public and charter schools by incentivizing the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) funding category. The combined number of students being served in

this type of partnership agreement would be higher, resulting in an increase to the M&O funding.

HB 21 Amendment by Representative Simmons was an attempt to attach a school voucher or tax credit program to the overall HB 21. The language for this amendment was “to instruct conference committee conferees to consider all methods of education choice for our special needs school students and the types of financing that goes along with that.” Representative Simmons attempted to include this amendment on the overall HB 21, due to the failure of his ‘free-standing’ school voucher bill.

The third data source was field notes. Hays and Singh (2012) discussed the role of the researcher and the importance of keeping field notes and memos. These types of records are usually associated with specific data collection techniques, to include interviews and observations. The researcher kept notes about each interview and observed the actions of the participants during debates regarding educational policies.

Participants

The participants were 10 members of the Texas House of Representatives from each major political party (five democrats, five republicans) providing thoughts, perceptions, and experiences in their lives, with the goal of determining the influence on public and charter schools and school voucher public policies. The state legislators were chosen by demographic makeup of the districts they were elected to represent in the 2016 general elections. Participating legislators are not identifiable. The legislators were identified with a name from the phonetic alphabet, their political party affiliation, and the

demographics of district they represent. Where necessary, some demographic information on participants is slightly disguised to protect their identity.

The identities of the elected officials are disguised in order encourage full and insightful answers to the interview questions. The following is the list of descriptions for the participating legislators in this study:

- Legislator Alpha, Republican, Rural District
- Legislator Bravo, Democrat, Mixed Urban and Rural District
- Legislator Charlie, Democrat, Urban District
- Legislator Delta, Republican, Mixed Urban and Rural District
- Legislator Echo, Republican, Suburban District
- Legislator Foxtrot, Democrat, Urban District
- Legislator Golf, Republican, Suburban District
- Legislator Hotel, Republican, Urban District
- Legislator India, Democrat, Urban District
- Legislator Juliet, Democrat, Urban District

No legislator interviewed authored legislation impacting public or charter schools to avoid obvious bias for or against the analyzed legislation.

Institutional Review Board Approval Process

The Institutional Review Board determined the study to be exempt. Under federal regulations, research including elected officials is exempt from IRB approval.

(3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter. **Authority:** 45 CFR 46.101(b)(3).

Data Coding

I coded the data using Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) and Lofland's (1971) coding schemes, along with Stone's regime theory. Bogdan and Biklen's and Lofland's themes were perceptions, background, activities, meanings, participation, relationships, and settings. The themes of life experiences and political ideology were coded based on Stone's regime theory (2015). By coding the data into these categories, I explored whether the participants formulated educational public policy in response to their perceptions of public and charter schools, and which themes influenced this outcome. Each of the themes can assist in identifying variables that may affect passage of legislation, impacting the long-term growth and success of public and charter schools.

Trustworthiness of Analysis

The participants agreed to participate in this study with the understanding that their identities would be concealed to encourage honesty and transparency in their interview responses. Anonymity was assured and the interviews were conducted in the

Texas Capitol, which is an environment familiar to all participants. Hays and Singh (2012) listed criteria, which were used in this study to strengthen its trustworthiness: dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (p. 201). Dependability attempts to measure the consistency of study results over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability is defined as the degree to which the findings of the study are genuine reflections and responses (openness) of the participants being interviewed or investigated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, authenticity describes researchers attempting to represent participants views and outlooks authentically (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Dependability can possibly be achieved if the same criteria were used in the selection of interview participants (e.g. equally divided between political parties, diversity in district demographics). Assurances regarding the anonymity of their identities were made to the interview participants, thus increasing the likelihood of genuine responses (confirmability). The legislators' interview responses were transcribed word for word with the use of a voice recorder to ensure authenticity.

Positionality and Bias

I am currently a member of the Texas House of Representatives representing District 117. This position gives me an advantage in that I witnessed many different public debates and votes impacting both public and charter schools during the 85th Legislative Session. Hays and Singh (2012) quoted Sword (1999), "Although some would criticize the subjectivity that is inherent in interpretivist work, no research is free of biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher. We cannot separate self from those activities in which we are intimately involved" (p. 197). Although I cast votes on

the issues being studied, and was active in the debates of educational policies in this study, it is my goal to utilize that experience to ensure readers have an insider's view to the formulation of educational policies.

Data Quality

To ensure that the data collected are credible, the quality of the data was assessed with the following strategies from Miles and Huberman (1994): checking for representativeness, checking out the rival explanations, and getting feedback from participants (p. 263). Ensuring the state legislators from both urban and rural districts were selected was critical to ensure a balanced look at the variables impacting the interview responses (i.e. constituent input, personal experiences, and overall perceptions). Determining what types of data are credible and reliable is important to the overall integrity of the study. Rival explanations for certain perceptions of charter and public schools allowed the researcher to determine whether participating legislators' explanations for support (or lack thereof) of certain educational public policies was based on fact or not. Feedback from the interviews took place during the interviews and was beneficial because of the direct interaction of the participating state legislators with the researcher.

Summary

Many of the perceptions, both positive and negative, regarding the performance of charter and public schools perpetuate the introduction and adoption of various educational public policies. These pieces of legislation can ultimately assist or damage

the long-term prospects of schools in Texas. Public and charter institutions may have more in common than many state legislators would like to believe and/or admit.

Today legislators are facing difficult decisions, which will influence their goal of giving children in their districts a strong educational foundation. Legislators' perceptions and views toward public and charter schools ultimately lead to numerous bills being filed to strengthen funding and support of both types of educational institutions. Is the long-term educational success of a child based on the life experiences of policy makers in Texas? Does the current debate on the possible need for vouchers for school choice truly influence whether a child is successful in school or in the future in Texas? Parents and students are counting on legislators to sort through these types of questions during the legislative session, and it is important to find out why certain public and/or charter school bills are successful, while others continue to fail.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Research Question 1

Chapter three presented the methodology used by the researcher to determine the thought process, perceptions, and motivations of Texas legislators while voting or creating public and charter school policies. Each legislator's background, political ideology, and district demographics were reviewed. The next two chapters review the findings for the two research questions in this study and provide an analysis of additional information that is relevant to the topic. This chapter begins by reviewing the responses regarding legislator's perceptions of public and charter schools. Next, the data gathered from the ten interviews is presented and the results reviewed to determine any similarities and differences in their responses. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

Themes

To what extent do life experiences, background, meanings, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to educational public policy?

Settings, life experiences, and perceptions are the top three themes that influenced a legislator's views toward educational public policies (see table below). The remaining themes ranked as follows (from strongest to weakest): background, participation, relationships, meanings, activities, and political ideology. The first theme of settings involves each legislator's surroundings (both past and present), district demographics, and constituents' perspectives. The second theme of life experiences consists of childhood and present-day experiences that have influenced each legislator's actions on

educational public policies. The remaining themes displayed varying influence levels on each legislator’s perceptions toward educational public policies to include relationships with family and constituents. Political ideology had the lowest influence on their perceptions and votes in the legislature. The table below displays the themes and their frequency based on the responses of the participating legislators.

Table 1: Themes

Theme	Definition	Theme frequency	Source of theme	Research Question #1	Research Question #2
Settings	District demographics, constituents’ perspective	104	B&B		X
Life Experiences	Childhood & present-day experiences	93	Stone	X	
Perceptions	Personal perceptions of public & charter schools	88	B&B		X
Background	Hometown demographics, teachers, mentors	77	B&B	X	
Participation	Participation in the education system, process	76	Lofland	X	
Relationships	Immediate family, teachers, and constituents	67	B&B	X	
Meanings	Mentorships, vision, outlooks	57	Lofland	X	
Activities	Political, educational, and community involvement	55	B&B	X	
Political Ideology	Political party, party platforms	32	Stone	X	

Due to the length of the data analysis, the research questions and data analysis are presented in two chapters. Chapter Four analyzes Research Question 1 and the themes of

life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology. Chapter Five provides an overview of the data and analysis for Research Question 2 and the setting and perceptions themes. Each of the data analysis chapters includes a summary.

Life Experiences

The first research question for this study focuses on seven themes: life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology, and the extent of influence the themes have on a lawmaker's actions on educational public policies. According to participating legislators, life experiences had the strongest influence on their perceptions of public and charter school policies (Research Question 1). The data collected suggested that legislator's reflections on their days in school are guiding their perceptions and official actions in the legislature. The life experiences variable was consistently described by members of both political parties regardless of the urban or rural demographics of their districts. A life experience response referenced childhood and present-day life experiences. The lack of charter schools and access to charter schools while during their childhood, was reflected in each legislator's understanding and views toward charter schools.

Specific Life Experiences

According to interview question four, regarding specific life experiences that had a positive or negative influence on their educational goals, many of the legislators reflected back to a teacher, or a combination of teachers and other authority figures at the

local public school. Eight of the participant's attended public school from K-12. Two of the participants attended a mix of public and private schools.

Legislator Alpha, Rural Republican

Legislator Alpha, a republican from a rural district, discussed his life experiences with public schools.

It was all positive. I had a lot of people in public schools that encouraged us to do the best we could. Encourage us to be better and make ourselves better...Great experience. I'm proud to have been a graduate of public schools. I think it has prepared me to do what we are doing now.

Two of the respondents dealt with discrimination and poverty as part of their life experiences in public schools. However, those life experiences did not foster a long-term negative perception of public schools.

Legislator Bravo, Urban Democrat

Legislator Bravo, a democrat from an urban district, described what type of life experiences influenced him while in school.

I saw a lot of discrimination when I attended high school. I have some good life experiences due to some of the teachers that I had that had a bright influence on my life...I had a great second grade teacher that left an impression on my life...The public schools in the area I was raised unfortunately at that point in time because there was so much discrimination, they did not have a great environment. But from then to now, it has completely changed.

Another legislator interviewed discussed her life experiences in the public school system as a minority.

Legislator Charlie, Urban Democrat

Legislator Charlie, a democrat from an urban district, specifically discussed the lack of direction from a majority of her teachers. She also stated that one coach ultimately provided her with guidance, leading her to make the decision to attend college.

The positive influence was the idea of camaraderie. The things we did together while on campus and I felt I grew up in school. The negative was I was the senior class president and didn't have a clue what I was going to do after graduation. I was raised by my mother who raised six children. Our father, who we knew, was not part of our lives. We did not as sit at the dinner table and talk about the future. Two weeks prior to graduating I had to navigate, on my own, what I was going to do after high school... There was no specific teachers or mentors who provided me guidance. The only reason I was even interested in going to college was during my senior year, the boy's basketball high school coach asked me what I was going to do after high school. I had never thought about that. When he said that, it opened my eyes and then I saw people going in and out of the counselor's office. So being a curious soul I went in and was told that other students are applying for college and that led me to apply and was accepted.

A minority group member, Legislator Charlie also talked about the influence that minority teachers and authority figures had on her life and her classmate's lives.

The public school I went to growing up, all of them elementary, middle and high school, was really, really wonderful. I grew up during the 1950's and 1960's and during that time there were people in my school who looked like me and had high expectations for us and cared a lot for the kids' success.

Although Legislator Charlie did not have any life experiences with charter schools growing up, she is open to supporting charter schools because some parents in her district don't wish to send their children to traditional public schools.

My residents do support charter schools, because they know that their kids are having a different experience and a lot of parents in my district recognized that their kids were not making it in traditional public schools and so to be able to have options was really important.

Legislator Delta, Mixed District Republican

Legislator Delta, a republican from a mixed urban and rural district, discussed the importance of having teachers, while in public school, that cared. This perception of caring teachers was affirmed throughout the state as he and his family moved seven times before he reached high school.

Yes, early on I had teachers that really brought us in and showed us that they cared for us and loved. Very nurturing. I think that was important at a young age. And then at an older age, I had teachers that still cared about us and showed that but then also held us accountable...My kids have all gone to public schools, I've gone to public school, my wife used to be a teacher, needed to divulge that to you, and so did my mother [teach] in public schools. I was on the school board and I've worked within and among public schools...I attended several public schools across the state because we moved seven times before I was in high school. Every single one of them was great. Maybe I didn't know better as a kid. I never knew if I was in a poor school or not. I always felt that it was about the teachers and if they nurtured you and took care of you, the other stuff just goes away.

Legislator Delta did not have any experiences with charter schools growing up and this caused him to have less information on the charter school system. This lack of familiarity with charter schools was visible in his vote against the House Bill 21 amendment (instructing conference committee members to look at school vouchers as an alternative funding source for charter and private schools) and his full support of House Bill 21 with its original language to increase funding for traditional ISD's.

Until now kind of a mystery [charter schools]. Who are they? What are those? I think there are some that do a really good job and I think there are some that are just in it for the money...But I think public schools are doing a good job. At the same time, we have [a] charter school in our area that is kind of controversial. My perception toward charter schools remains to be seen. We will see how they perform, we don't have many in the district.

Legislator Echo, Suburban Republican

Legislator Echo, a republican from a suburban district, described the importance of a teacher who changed his life by identifying him at an early age as gifted and talented. This recognition and guidance from this teacher led to his current career field, and left him with a strong positive perception of public schools.

I had a third-grade teacher who pulled my parents in for a parent-teacher conference and said your son is 'gifted and talented' and you need to start doing some specific things to challenge him academically and go on to do great things. That changed my life for the better. I credit my third-grade teacher for that... Then again, I had another one in high school my biology teacher, Ms. Smith, who got me focused on going to medical school. She was a big help. We actually did a field trip down to (a medical school). I remember actually going [there] and saying "gosh if I can go to medical school here someday, that would be really a great thing." And that's what happened. I very much remember that trip when I actually got to medical school thinking this is a dream come true.

According to Legislator Echo, the public school system he attended was considered one of the best in Texas, having received the President's award for excellence in education for two consecutive years.

Legislator Foxtrot, Urban Democrat

One of the interviewees discussed her lack of experiences with charter schools growing up. Legislator Foxtrot, a democrat from an urban district, also discussed having one math instructor who made a positive impression in her life.

I had a fantastic math teacher that was very positive in terms of making sure the students understood the importance of education and pursuing it. This was in a public school... What I like about public schools is obviously that the Texas constitution requires that everybody be educated and that it is free. So, my perception of public school is positive. I can't say that I have a good perception of charter schools because we do not have that many charter schools in our community and the ones we do have not led to any better or positive outcomes with our student population.

The lack of experiences with charter schools was a common theme discussed by many of the participants. The lack of life experiences with charter schools was reflected in the votes taken toward both public and charter schools policies. Legislator Foxtrot voted for HB 21 and against the HB 21 amendment regarding school vouchers.

Legislator Golf, Urban Republican

Legislator Golf, a republican from an urban district, also had positive experiences while in public school and these experiences led to a career in education.

I debated all through junior high and high school and into college and that's a skill I have utilized probably more than any in life...Ms. Susan, my debate coach. That was high school but she also works with us in middle school. Very much pushed us to achieve our goals and still speak with her often. I actually started a debate program that's now 14 years old where our kids went to school and I coached for 12 of those 14 years and taught every day.

Her lack of interaction with charter schools growing up and lack of charter schools in the district she currently represents has caused her to lean on traditional independent school districts for direction.

My perception of charter schools is that I really don't have any direct experience with them other than if you ask a superintendent of their view, which may not be as positive, but I have no direct experience...The public schools, it's amazing to me the programs and the courses that are offered and the curriculum that is offered, and the opportunities for kids to get hands-on experience. So, public is exceptional. Again, I don't have much experience because there are really not many charter schools in my district.

Legislator Golf voted for Senate Bill 1882 which requires traditional ISD's and charter schools to work together while negotiating various contracts with local vendors. She did not vote for the HB 21 amendment for alternative funding mechanisms for Texas schools.

Legislator Hotel, Urban Republican

Legislator Hotel, a republican from an urban district, had positive experiences attending public schools. The small number of students in his class was a life experience that he dealt with.

I had a great upbringing, of course I was in a very rural area. My high school graduation class had about 50. I got to participate in a lot of sports. We were rated number one in basketball and got whipped my senior year but we had a good time. And I learned a lot, I had good teachers in my public school...I can't remember one bad one [teacher]...I believe that public schools are important to our country, our state.

The positive life experiences of Legislator Hotel did not prevent him from supporting school choice for Texas families. His recent life experiences caused his perceptions of school choice to be favorable.

We have good public schools in our area and we have a few charter schools that are options for those. I am opposed to school choice when it comes to money, but I am not opposed to school choice when it comes to an option for a parent. Because you will have situations, I was at a client's two weeks ago and they moved their daughter from Crum high school to Liberty Christian School. Was it the because of any of the classes and the parents said 'no, they were all excellent.' It was personal situation with the quarterback of the football team, unfortunately who was her boyfriend. It created an issue where they needed to move her to another school. And so, was it because of the quality of education? No, it was a personal circumstance. We all can have those and as parents we need to make a decision every day, every week, every month, every year, on what is right for our children. I am not opposed to home-school, I am not opposed to private school, I am opposed [to] taking money from public education.

Legislator Hotel's position on school choice was supportive, however he did not support school vouchers in Texas. He stated that most of the constituents in his district did not support charter schools. The position of being in support of school choice and against the redirection of funding from public schools was unique to this legislator.

Legislator India, Urban Democrat

Legislator India, a democrat from an urban district, talked about poverty in her public school and the impact it left on her.

To be in a public school that was a Title 1 school really exposed me to people of all walks. I wasn't raised in poverty, it was something that was all around me and my best friends were from low-income families. That helped me to understand [being poor].

She also had some positive life experiences in public school, but felt she could have received a better education. According to Legislator India, her parents attempted to send her to private school, but couldn't afford it.

I felt like I could have gotten a better education... They [parents] tried to send me to private Catholic school. They ended up sending my younger sister to private Catholic school. They couldn't do that with me because they didn't have money, but ten years later they did, but I ended up staying in public schools.

Although her reflections about the quality of education received at a public school were entirely favorable, she discussed some excellent teachers and the benefits of the gifted and talented program. She currently has both of her children in the public school system.

It was helpful to be in classes where I was surrounded by very bright kids. I was in the gifted and talented classes and we really challenged each other... There was one great history teacher that I had who believed in me and expressed confidence in me.

As mentioned previously, the interactions with her classmates who were poor, helped illuminate their challenges.

Legislator Juliet, Urban Democrat

Legislator Juliet, a democrat from an urban district, had life experiences in both public and private schools and credited all of his teachers for believing in him and

motivating him. His perceptions about charter schools were not negative and he believes that charter schools have good outreach in the community.

I mainly went to public schools. I went to private school 2nd and 3rd grade. Public school throughout the rest... Teachers are the ones who believed in me and gave me motivation... Throughout my schooling there were different teachers in different grades who were inspirational... I think charter schools also do a good job. We are always having debate on the House floor about whether more funding should go to public schools versus charter schools. I have charter schools in my district and I've seen good outreach as well.

His positive perceptions of charter schools influenced his votes on the three pieces of legislation. Legislator Juliet voted to increase funding for public schools in HB 21, voted for public and charter school cooperation in SB 1882, and voted against the HB 21 amendment for the possible use of school vouchers in Texas. His perceptions have changed with his current life experiences while serving in the legislature.

Yes, especially once I got into the legislature I have learned a lot more. It's opened up my eyes to the challenges they face. My overall perception is that they do the best they can with what they've got... The charter schools have good outcomes and good ratings so my perception is positive overall. Residents strongly support public schools. Some residents do support charter schools.

According to participating legislators, life experiences, with a frequency score of 93, had the strongest influence on their perceptions of public and charter schools. Their perceptions of both public and charter schools are tied directly to their life experiences and their direct interactions, or lack of interactions, with both types of institutions.

Background

According to participating legislators, background had the second strongest influence on their perceptions of public and charter school policies. The theme background is defined as life experiences of the legislator, the type of district represented,

schools attended, experiences (childhood and current) with teachers and school administrators, hometown demographics, and parental perceptions and involvement. An important part of being a public official is one's effort to get elected and then re-elected on the following election cycle. The demographics of the district each legislator represents must be fully understood in order to have a pulse on his or her constituent's interests and views. The residents of both rural and urban districts in Texas tend to have a strong connection to the local traditional public school districts. Friday Night Lights, as high school football in Texas is known, and its football rivalries have become the stuff of TV shows and movies. Many of the participating legislators' responses reflected long-standing connections to the local public school district. The theme background had the second highest frequency at 77. Their constituents educate them quickly on the importance of the local public schools in the heart of their community.

Background to the Forefront

The main questions that focused on each legislators' background and its influence on their perception of public and charter schools were questions one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and, eleven. Questions one thru three asked about their time in the House of Representatives, the type of demographics of the district they currently represent, and the types of schools they attended. Questions four thru nine focused on the teachers and mentors in their schools, while question eleven focused on the views of the legislator's constituents toward public and charter schools.

Legislator Alpha, Rural Republican

Legislator Alpha, rural republican, described his background in the legislature, type of district represented, and the type of school he attended.

This is my second term. Going on four years...It's all rural, my largest county has about 30,000 people in it...Public schools. K-12. Graduate of public school.

The responses by Legislator Alpha indicated that the district was not anchored by a large city and that his educational background was firmly in a traditional public school district.

The influence of the local school district and his lack of interaction with charters schools was reflected in the answers to questions six and seven.

I have a good perception (of public schools). Back home they are the center of our communities. Without public schools, it hard to imagine some of the small towns without them-that's their lifeblood. Charter schools are a little different. We don't have a lot of them back home. They are set up very differently. Of course, state-funded, but privately run. Some of the oversight that our public schools have but a little different obviously than our public schools...Great experience. I'm proud to have been a graduate of public schools. I think it's prepared me to do what we are doing right now. As I said there's not [a]lot of non-public schools, I actually have more counties in the district than I have non-public schools.

The influence of teachers on his personal educational goals was stated in response to questions four and five. A teacher who was part of his childhood background still lives in the childhood hometown and continues to foster a positive perception of the local school district.

It was all positive, I had a lot of people in public schools that encouraged us to do the best we could. Encouraged us to be better and make ourselves better...I did have a 3rd grade teacher. She was one of my better teachers and really nurtured the quest for knowledge even at a young age. I still see her around and I always tell she was my favorite teacher.

Legislator Alpha also revealed the extent of his upbringing by his parents, their perceptions and views toward public school, and whether the legislator has children

attending public, private, or charter schools. The views of his constituents were also discussed. Their views assisted in the formulation of the legislator's perceptions, actions, and votes regarding educational public policies. The theoretical framework guiding this study is Regime Theory (Stone, 2015). The theory focuses on the interaction between public officials, residents, and administrators, and their roles in decisions and agendas for schools. The response to question eleven from Legislator Alpha reflects Stone's regime theory in action.

Positive [parent's perceptions of the local public or charter school]. My mom was on several boards, not the school board, but several of the different boards that they had for student, parent, and teacher interaction... Yes, [my parents] also graduated from public schools. I am a parent. My child will be in public school... They [constituents] support public schools. Like I said not a lot of non-public schools in the district. Big supporters of public schools.

Legislator Alpha concluded the interview with a strong statement in support for public schools in Texas.

I think public schools are going to continue to be the lifeblood of our communities across the state. I think they are going to continue to educate and prepare the next generation of workers for our state and they continue to do a great job in doing that.

Legislator Bravo, Urban Democrat

Legislator Bravo, urban democrat, described his background in the legislature, type of district represented, and the type of school attended.

My district is a combination of urban and rural communities... I attended public school for K-12.

The legislator had a combination of positive and negative memories about the local public school district. Discrimination was prevalent according to Legislator Bravo and

while that influenced perceptions initially, teachers helped reverse that negative perception.

Negatively [perception of public schools], I saw a lot of discrimination when I attended high school. I had some good life experiences due to some of the teachers that I had that had a bright influence on my life...I had a great second grade teacher that left an impression of my life...The public schools in the area I was raised, unfortunately at that point in time because there was so much discrimination, they did not have a great environment. But from then to now it has changed completely.

Legislator Bravo's background also consists of serving as a school board trustee for a local school district. The legislator's previous elected office gave him a strong understanding of the public school system and contributed to his negative perceptions of charter schools.

I believe charter schools are out there for profit and profit only. I think the teacher and faculty truly do want to educate but unfortunately, they are not held to the standards or qualification levels required by public schools...The charter schools do not open their doors to those that are special needs students and those that have behavioral problems. Yes, the residents in my district support the public schools. Some of the residents in my district support charter schools.

The legislator's background as a former school board trustee, combined with constituents' support of public schools, are the leading variables contributing to his perceptions and actions toward public and charter school public policies.

Legislator Charlie, Urban Democrat

Legislator Charlie, urban democrat, background consists of serving as a legislator and being a public school graduate.

I consider my district urban for sure...Growing up I attended public school K-12.

The legislator did not have teachers who provided mentorship and guidance. Rather, the boys' basketball head coach provided guidance and direction.

The negative was I was the senior class president and didn't have a clue what I was going to do after graduation... Two weeks prior to graduating I had to navigate, on my own, what I was going to do after high school... There was no specific teachers or mentors who provided me guidance. The only reason I was even interested in going to college was during my senior year, the boys' basketball high school coach asked me what I was going to do after high school. I had never thought about that. When he said that, it opened my eyes and then I saw people going in and out of the counselor's office. So being a curious soul I went in and was told that other students are applying for college and that led me to apply and [I] was accepted.

Legislator Charlie's background included time working to establish a charter school in the area. This unique background gave a clear understanding of the day-to-day operations of a charter school.

I love public charter schools-public charters-I want to emphasize that because I believe they became the option for those kids who fell through the cracks. Traditional public schools had not been meeting the needs of all kids and we don't need any kids to fail. Charters were the safety net and I thought public charters are a genius idea. I am very optimistic and hopeful for what charter schools can do, have done, and will continue to do.

The legislator's legislative district consists of constituents who are supportive of both public and charter schools, however the legislator does not believe in establishing a school voucher system.

What I can see is that both types of schools are more focused on that than [state accountability compliance] the individual students themselves. Plus, I believe that traditional public schools are so large, they are larger than some junior colleges, and that's fearful to me because school is where you grow up and when you just become a number, then that to me is wrong. The teachers should know your name, they should know your family, they should know about you. That's my concern about traditional public schools right now... As it relates to charter schools, I believe that charters are here to stay. They have been seen as a quasi-public environment that I think is good. And I think parents have shown that they

love charters, the results have shown charters are successful if they run properly. I believe there is a political will and community will to maintain charters for the future of Texas.

The legislator's interview responses display Stone's regime theory, due to the elected position of power, using the governance structure at the Texas capitol to craft and lead policies favorable to charter schools.

Legislator Delta, Mixed District Republican

Legislator Delta, a republican from a mixed urban and rural area, is a multi-term representative with two immediate family members that have decades of experience in public schools. Their spouse and mother were public school teachers, which influenced their perception of public schools. Legislator Delta served as a school board trustee before election to the House of Representatives, which further contributed to a positive perception of public schools. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recognized that activities (serving as a school board trustee) and relationships (wife and mother serving as public school teachers) strongly influences actions on educational policies.

My perception of public schools is very positive...I have a very positive outlook toward them and I really believe that many of them think of education as a ministry and that's what they are there for and not for the paycheck. Things can always run better but I'm pretty high on our public schools.

The influence of their background is reflected throughout the interview and his votes on the three legislative bills were consistent with his perceptions of public and charter schools. Legislator Delta believed in school choice due to his relationship with constituents and offered a disclaimer to the "no" vote on the HB 21 Amendment (possible creation of school vouchers).

Yes, I live in a unique district where the deal is “whatever works.” We have Christian schools, private schools, charter schools, and public schools. Not very many charter schools but everybody is very supportive of all of those. You will see a lot of the same faces helping raise money for public schools, private schools, and charters. Children learn in different ways, and there needs to be each one of those institutions [public, charter, and private]. I voted against that [school vouchers]. I am for exploring all options for our kids that’s been my mantra since I came into office and something I really do believe in and it wasn’t an easy vote. Where are we going to find private schools that are going to be able to meet those needs statewide and take tax dollars and meet the needs of those kids, when we have public schools that do that every day and have done a good job of it. If we need to move kids around, let’s do that. Let’s be flexible. Let’s explore those options but I just don’t know that vouchers are the answer.

The legislator’s response regarding school choice and school vouchers reflect how constituents influence legislator’s actions, even those with a strong family background of service to traditional public school districts.

Legislator Echo, Suburban Republican

Legislator Echo, republican from a suburban district, is a legislator who attended public schools from K-12. The legislator credits the teachers at schools attended for mentoring and guiding him to consider and attend graduate school. The legislator’s background included attending one of the best public school districts in the state. This challenging environment led to the belief that high school was more difficult than graduate school.

It was considered to be one of the best in Texas if not the country. It received the President’s award for excellence in education or two years in a row... The reason I went to public school is because we lived in [...] ISD. That school was better than most expensive private schools. More competitive, more challenging, more opportunities. So, it was very good... I grew up thinking that I had more competition and challenges academically in high school, than I had in college and probably even in [graduate] school.

Given his background (coming from a strong public school district), the perceptions of public schools have changed due to his religious beliefs. Legislator Echo has children who were previously home-schooled and is planning on sending them to a Christian private school.

A lot of my difficulties with public schools center around two things that I think are pretty much beyond the public schools' control. One [of] the ridiculous restrictions we put on them-testing, curriculum standardization. My high school would never have survived in the current environment. The second one is the political climate that we live in today is such that a person of faith, and I know that people disagree, I do think that it is difficult in the public school system to be a person of faith. I think it is a challenging environment. With all the lawsuits and regulations and things like that, regarding prayer, it becomes very difficult, and it's something that I don't think my kids should have to put up with.

The legislator's actions on the three votes analyzed reflected support for public schools (HB 21), and support for public and charter cooperation (SB 1882). Legislator Echo was recorded as "absent" for the vote on HB 21 Amendment regarding school vouchers and choice, however, did state conditional support for the amendment during the interview.

I don't think we should allow public money to follow students into an environment where they are not going to be required to have the same scrutiny or same requirements as what we force on public schools...My argument is not necessarily against school vouchers per se, but it's more in the implementation in making sure we have consistent across the board education accountability standards that apply to all education opportunities that take state dollars...Again I'm ok with that [support of HB 21 Amendment] as long as my conditions of oversight and accountability are maintained and consistent.

Legislator Foxtrot, Urban Democrat

Legislator Foxtrot, democrat from an urban district, described a background of attending both private and public schools. A public school teacher provided her

inspiration for pursuing educational goals and this led to a positive perception of public schools.

I had a fantastic math teacher that was very positive in terms of making sure the students understood the importance of education and pursuing it. This was in a public school.

This legislator does not have a positive perception of charter schools due to the lack of charter schools in the district that they currently represent. This unfamiliarity with charter schools is a strong variable leading to negative perceptions between Foxtrot and other legislators interviewed.

I can't say that I have a good perception of charter schools because we do not have that many charter schools in our community and the ones we do have not led to any better or positive outcomes with our student population...By the time I graduated from high school or went off to college, there really wasn't any charter schools. Now there are and so my perceptions now on the schools are based on my own research.

Legislator Foxtrot's votes on the three legislative bills are consistent with the interview responses, in that she voted for HB 21, SB 1882 and against the HB 21 Amendment.

Legislator Golf, Urban Republican

Legislator Golf, a republican from a suburban district, graduated from a public high school and sent their children to private school. The legislator's responses revealed experience as a debate coach for 12 years and as a teacher for 14 years. The legislator revealed little to no interaction with charter schools due to charter schools not being located in the district. Legislator Golf's current perceptions toward public and charter schools reflect a displeasure with public school class sizes and a "no opinion" toward charter schools.

I think class sizes are too large and ISD's are way too large and schools are too large. Charters, again no opinion.

Having children in private school did not influence the vote on HB 21 amendment on the creation of school vouchers, as a vote against the HB 21 Amendment was recorded.

Legislator Hotel, Urban Republican

Legislator Hotel, republican from an urban district, was a public school graduate, served as a state legislator for less than a year, and has previously served as an elected school board trustee. This background influenced their views on charter schools, to include an opinion of no charter schools in Texas if they don't follow the same rules and admissions guidelines as public schools.

As a former school board member, I understand that there is a need for charter schools. I believe that charter schools are fine as long as they go by the same rules as the regular schools. As long as they have to accept the same people. That can't be specific and pick and choose who they want to be in their school. I am willing to allow them room as a choice for people locally, but I still believe our emphasis should be on public school without the charter [schools].

Their spouse is a public school teacher and the legislator believed in parents having the freedom to choose any school for their child. This freedom would not include the creation of school vouchers as the legislator voted against HB 21 Amendment.

Legislator India, Urban Democrat

Legislator India, a democrat from an urban district, attended public school. The legislator was in the Gifted and Talented Program and had a history teacher who believed in their academic abilities. A majority of the legislative district constituents supported public schools, while most do not support charter schools. Given this background, the legislator's perception of charter schools was not favorable. The legislator believes

charter schools only select the top students for admission and have fewer accountability measures to meet.

The only difference between a charter school and a public school is that a charter school is not governed by democratically-elected people from the community. And a charter school doesn't have to let in all kids. I have a bill that says charter schools can't keep kids out for disciplinary reasons. Public schools have to let in all kids. Charter schools also don't have to abide by the same rules for keeping kids in their schools. From what I can tell the only distinction is they will also have to meet accountability standards. My perception of charter schools is they are able to only let in kids and only keep in kids that are serious about studying and it creates an environment that is easier to teach in and easier to learn in for those students. I think that given those circumstances those who know what they are doing are able to achieve well, but again there are so many charter schools all across the state, that not all of them know what they are doing.

The votes on charter schools are in line with their perceptions. Legislator India voted for HB 21, against SB 1882, and against the HB 21 Amendment. The legislator's background in public schools and knowledge of charter schools made them a strong advocate for public schools, while witnessing the growing, organized efforts of charter school advocates at the Texas capitol.

I don't know what the end game is supposed to be. It is just hard to tell. There is a lot of money behind the charter school movement. Politically they probably spend more money in this place, more than anyone else. It has great influence. But also, parents, more and more, are questioning them.

Legislator Juliet, Urban Democrat

Legislator Juliet, a democrat from an urban district, attended private and public school. A graduate of public school, the legislator believed teachers from both types of schools had a positive influence on his educational goals.

Throughout my schooling there were different teachers in different grades that were inspirational.

The legislator is in his second-term as a state legislator and this experience has helped craft positive perceptions of both charter and public schools. This is another example of Stone's regime theory (2015) guiding educational public policies. Juliet's interactions with both public and charter school's administrators provided the foundation for the actions and perceptions toward charter and public schools. Stone's regime theory focuses on the interaction between public officials, residents, and school administrators in crafting educational public policies.

I think that public schools in our state can always do better. I think the legislature should do more for funding but overall, they are doing the best they can with what they have. I think charter schools also do a good job...I have charter schools in my district and I've seen good outreach [from them] as well.

Juliet's background and open-minded perceptions toward charter schools did not influence the vote on the HB 21 Amendment, as he voted against it.

Background Summary

To what extent do life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to education public policy? According to participants, a legislator's background had the second strongest influence on his or her perceptions of public and charter schools. Their perceptions of both public and charter schools are influenced by their upbringing, life experiences, type of district represented, schools attended, experiences with teachers and school administrators, hometown demographics, and parental perceptions and involvement.

Political Ideology

The first research question for this study focused on seven themes and the extent and influence the themes have on a lawmaker's perceptions and official acts on charter and public school educational public policies. According to participating legislators, political ideology had the least influence on their perceptions of public and charter schools, and their official actions (votes). The political ideology theme is defined as the political party of the legislator, their party's platform, their views on school choice, views on the establishment of school vouchers, and their actual votes on HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment. Participating legislator's responses were analyzed to determine if either of the major political parties or party platforms was referenced. Both the Texas Democratic Party and Texas Republican Party adopted party platforms regarding educational policies in Texas. In June 2016, at their state convention, the Texas Democratic Party adopted an issues platform that included their official stance on educational policies. It reads as follows regarding school choice and school vouchers (www.texasdemocrats.org, 2016):

- Oppose the misnamed “school choice” schemes of using public tax money for the support of private and sectarian schools;
- Believe “school choice” is a deceptive marketing frame that purports to advocate something that already exists-school choice-but whose true purpose is to divert public school funds to vouchers on tax credit systems supporting private and sectarian schools;
- That adoption of any vouchers or tax credit scheme would unavoidably, financially and academically, damage public schools.

In May 2016, at their state convention, the Republican Party of Texas adopted platform included their official stance on educational policies. It reads as follows regarding school choice and school vouchers (www.texasgop.org, 2016):

- We believe that all children should have access to quality education. We support the right to choose public, private, charter, or home education. We support the distribution of educational funds in a manner that they follow the student to any school, whether public, private, charter, or home school through means of tax exemption or credits.

Both major political parties have conflicting educational policies positions on school choice and school vouchers. An assumption can be made that state legislators would follow the guidance from their party's platform, however, the interviews indicated that political party platforms and ideology are not influencing legislators' perceptions or official votes during the legislative session.

Texas Politics in Educational Policies

The main questions that focused on the political ideology of the legislator and the influence on their perception of public and charter schools are questions one, two, twelve, thirteen, and fifteen. Questions one and two are specific questions discussing their time in the Texas House of Representatives and the type of demographics of the district they currently represent. Questions twelve and thirteen revealed their perceptions and views on school choice and the establishment of a school voucher system in Texas, while question fifteen reviewed three legislative votes (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment) taken during the 85th Legislative Session. These legislative bills impacted

the funding of public schools, charter and public school cooperation, and the potential establishment of school vouchers. The following table presents each legislators' district demographic, political party, HB 21 (Vote 1), SB 1882 (Vote 2), and HB 21 Amendment (Vote 3) versus political party platform.

Table 2: Political Ideology

Legislator	District and party	Vote 1 vs. Party Platform	Vote 2 vs. Party Platform	Vote 3 vs. Party Platform
Alpha	Rural, Republican	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, against party platform
Bravo	Urban, Democrat	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, aligned with party platform
Charlie	Urban, Democrat	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, aligned with party platform
Delta	Mixed, Republican	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, against party platform
Echo	Suburban, Republican	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	Absent for vote, vocally supportive of vouchers
Foxtrot	Urban, Democrat	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, aligned with party platform
Golf	Suburban, Republican	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, against party platform
Hotel	Urban, Republican	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, against party platform
India	Urban, Democrat	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, against party platform	No, aligned with party platform
Juliet	Urban, Democrat	Yes, aligned with party platform	Yes, aligned with party platform	No, aligned with party platform

Legislator Alpha, Rural Republican

Legislator Alpha, rural republican, described their background in the legislature and the type of district they currently represent. This information is important as it reflects their ability to get elected and re-elected as a member of the Texas Republican Party. The response to question number two provided insight to the demographics of their district. A state representative's district demographics have a significant influence on their perceptions and actions in the legislature. If a state legislator wants to continue serving, they must have an understanding of the views and beliefs of their constituents.

Given the rural demographics of the district, it is important to note the previous interview response regarding perceptions of public and charters schools and constituents' views on them.

I have a good perception. Back home they are the center of our communities. Without public schools, it hard to imagine some of the small towns without them- that's their lifeblood. Charter schools are a little different. We don't have a lot of them back home.

The lack of charter schools in the rural district and the residents' support of public schools led Alpha to be at odds with the party platform which states, "We support the right to choose public, private, charter, or home education. We support the distribution of educational funds in a manner that they follow the student to any school, whether public, private, charter, or home school through means of tax exemption or credits"

(www.texasgop.org, 2016).

Alpha's responses on school choice and school vouchers were influenced directly by the district's demographics, a rural district with majority public school and few charters, and not the political ideology of the political party.

I do not believe in school choice. The going [definition] now is using state dollars to give parents the use of those funds to go a non-public school...I do not believe the state of Texas should establish a school voucher program.

His votes on public and charter school policies and policies regarding the establishment of a school voucher program were a reflection of the demographics of the district and constituents.

[HB 21]-I voted for that. [SB 1882]-I voted for that. And one of the things I liked about this is we want our public schools to be better and if there's a chance where they can be better by teaming up with charter schools then I am all for that. [HB 21 amendment]-I did not vote for that amendment.

Political ideology's influence was minimal for Alpha, while his constituents' ideology toward public schools had the most influence.

Legislator Bravo, Urban Democrat

Legislator Bravo, urban democrat, described their experience in the legislature and the type of district currently represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of serving as a school board trustee.

The educational policy platform of their political party states, "Oppose the misnamed 'school choice' schemes of using public tax money for the support of private and sectarian schools; Believe "school choice" is a deceptive marketing frame that purports to advocate something that already exists-school choice-but whose true purpose is to divert public school funds to vouchers on tax credit systems supporting private and

sectarian schools; That adoption of any vouchers or tax credit scheme would unavoidably, financially and academically, damage public school”

(www.texasdemocrats.org, 2016).

His views on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers are aligned with his political party’s policy platform.

I do not believe in school choice. When I hear the term school choice I hear the taxpayers paying for a parent to choose a different school other than the school where everyone is paying taxes. A parent is able to send their child to a different school because they don’t agree with the school’s policies and then the remaining residents end up footing the bill for it...No I do not believe the state of Texas should establish a school voucher program...[HB 2]-I voted in favor. [SB 1882]-Voted for charter/public cooperation. [HB 21 Voucher amendment]-I voted no.

Political ideology influenced Legislator Bravo and his views are in line with constituents.

Yes, the residents in my district support the public schools. Some of the residents in my district support charter schools.

Legislator Charlie, Urban Democrat

Legislator Charlie, urban democrat, described their background in the legislature and type of district currently represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed an openness and support toward charter schools in the district.

I love public charter schools-public charters-I want to emphasize that because I believe they became the option for those kids who fell through the cracks.

The educational policy platform of their political party states, “school choice” is a deceptive marketing frame that purports to advocate something that already exists-school choice-but whose true purpose is to divert public school funds to vouchers on tax credit systems supporting private and sectarian schools; That adoption of any vouchers or tax

credit scheme would unavoidably, financially and academically, damage public school” (www.texasdemocrats.org, 2016).

Their views on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers are partially aligned with the political party’s policy platform. This legislator does believe in school choice for the district’s parents, however, does not believe in the taking of funding away from traditional public school to fund school vouchers.

School choice for me should mean selection within the public realm. The magnet school that may focus on STEM. The magnet school that may focus on performing arts. The magnet school that may focus strictly on engineering. That to me is what school choice is. I am concerned that the national definition of school choice is focused around private schools and its conflating-private schools and school choice. I am not for private school taking public money. School choice is creativity and innovation within the public realm... I do not believe that State of Texas should establish a school voucher program because has not been vetted and there has been no talk of accountability, and what that looks like if private entities take public dollars. When I hear school vouchers for private schools I’m hearing is for the state to give the money but not hold them accountable for anything. Private schools are not going to test their kids or any of the things you have other schools doing, but they want that public money. I don’t think that should happen... [HB 21]-I voted in favor of it. I believe the state should step up and do what it’s supposed to do which is finance the schools properly. As well as I like the weighted average added to ELL and CTE added to 8th graders. [SB 1882]-I voted yes to that, instead of being adversaries, we don’t have the option to say pick one or the other. I think we should be doing is asking how can we work together to make sure that the traditional public schools can meet kids needs and that charter in their area can also meet those needs. [HB 21 Voucher amendment]- I voted against that because again it brings it to vouchers which is the private school space that I am not interested in and I think is wrong. If someone has an interest in special needs environment, they should open up a public charter school so that they can be held accountable for targeting special needs.

Political ideology influenced Charlie somewhat and their views are in line with constituents.

My residents do support public schools and more so than probably many other because traditional public [schools] represent the history of community...My residents do support charter schools...a lot of parents in my district recognized that their kids were not making it traditional public and so to be able to have options was really important.

Legislator Delta, Mixed District Republican

Legislator Delta's previous interview responses revealed their spouse and mother working as public school teachers and serving previously as a school board trustee. It was revealed that charter schools were not located in the district.

I have a mixed district. I have a suburban component to it-very suburban/urban-in one county. And in another county, that is very rural. One county of 18,000 people and another county of 160,000 so I have both components.

The educational policy platform of his political party advocates for school choice and an establishment of school vouchers or tax credits for the school of parents' choice. Delta's views on school choice and school voucher, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers were partially aligned with his political party's policy platform. The legislator believed in school choice, but not in taking of funding away from traditional public school monies to fund school vouchers. The legislator revealed discussions with private school leaders in the district who were not interested in the creation of a school voucher program due to the government regulation that would be attached to those types of funds.

Yes, I do believe in school choice. We have school choice in my opinion in my area because we have enrollment throughout our counties and if you are in one area and you want to go to school in another city, you can do that...No I don't believe the state should establish a school voucher program. I believe that's taxpayer money. Talking to my private schools and religious schools in my area are not supportive of that because they don't want the strings attached to a voucher. [HB 21]-I voted for that. [SB 1882]-I vote for it. [HB 21 Amendment]-I

voted against that. I am for exploring all options for our kids that's been my mantra since I came into office and something I really do believe in and it wasn't an easy vote.

Political ideology's influence on Legislator Delta is somewhat apparent, as the legislator struggled with voting against the school voucher amendment. The legislator's views and perceptions are in line with his constituents.

Yes, the residents in my district support public schools...Not very many charter schools, but everybody is very supportive of all of those.

Legislator Echo, Suburban Republican

Legislator Echo, suburban republican, described their background in the legislature and type of district currently represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of graduating from "one of the best" public schools in the country and the influence of the legislator's religious faith on his perceptions of public schools. The interview responses revealed few (if any) charter schools located in his legislative district.

My district is suburban district...I think I only have one charter school in my district and I'm not even sure where it is. So, to be clear, in my area we don't need charter schools because the public school system is so good, parents wouldn't send their kids anywhere else. There is not even a market for it.

Legislator Echo's views on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers are aligned with his political party's policy platform. This legislator was absent during the HB 21 Amendment vote, but stated his support during the interview for the creation of a school voucher program. His only requirement was that schools receiving public funds follow the same accountability standards as public schools.

I do believe in school choice as long as the playing field is level...[School Voucher program] Only if those other conditions are met. My argument is not necessarily against school vouchers per se, but it's more in the implementation in making sure we have consistent across the board education accountability standards that apply to all education opportunities that take state dollars. [HB 21]- I voted for it. I think it's important that we properly fund public schools. [SB 1882]-I think it's important that they cooperate. [HB 21 Amendment]-[Absent] Again I'm ok with that as long as my conditions of oversight and accountability are maintained and consistent.

Political ideology's influence on Legislator Echo was apparent, as their support for school choice and school vouchers was consistent with the political party's platform.

Legislator Foxtrot, Urban Democrat

Legislator Foxtrot, urban democrat, described their background in the legislature and type of district currently represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of attending both a private and public school, and also sending their children to a private school.

Urban [district]...I attended both a private and a public school. Not a charter school...My children attended private schools.

The educational policy platform of her political party is opposed to school choice and the use of public tax money for the support of private and sectarian schools

(www.texasdemocrats.org, 2016). The legislator's perceptions on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) are aligned with her political party's policy platform.

I identify school choice as being vouchers and funding for charters schools. Allowing funding for charter schools, there-by giving a student and a parent the opportunity to send their kids to a charter school...No [to school voucher program]. [HB 21]-I was voting in favor of public schools. Because it's important, because of the recent supreme court case, even though they didn't declare the public school finance system was unconstitutional, they basically said

it was close to unconstitutional. And we need to definitely make changes with regards to public schools. [SB 1882]-Part of the charter school law allows a public school, an ISD, to actually start up their own charter schools. I am not in disagreement with that. I think that if a charter schools works within the system of the ISD, I am supportive of it. If it's independent, I am not because they are not regulated the way they need to be. I voted for it. [HB 21 Amendment]-Against.

Political ideology's influence on Legislator Foxtrot was strong and the legislator's views were in line with her constituents.

Yes, my residents support public schools. I'm certain that some of them do support charter schools.

Legislator Golf, Urban Republican

Legislator Golf, suburban republican, described their background in the legislature and type of district currently represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of graduating from a public school and the influence of their debate coach on his life. Their interview responses also revealed a lack of interaction with the local charter schools located in their district.

I served [time frame]... We are suburban... My perception of charter schools is that I really don't have any direct experience with them other than if you ask a superintendent of their view which may not be as positive, but I have no direct experience.

Legislator Golf's views on school choice and school voucher, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers were not aligned with the political party's policy platform.

I do not believe in school choice. In my mind, parents are the best judges of where their kids should attend and they have that choice today... I don't believe we can even begin to evaluate that [school vouchers] until we fix school finance. [HB 21]-Support it. [SB 1882]- I supported that. [HB 21 Amendment]-I opposed that.

Political ideology's influence on Legislator Golf was minimal, as support for school choice and school vouchers was not consistent with the political party's platform.

Legislator Hotel, Urban Republican

Legislator Hotel, urban republican, described their background in the legislature and district. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of graduating from a public school, serving as a school board trustee, and having a grade school class of less than 10 students.

In 1983 when I moved to my district it was rural, but now its urban. We have gone from under 200,000 to over 700,000 [in the county]...As a former school board member, I understand that there is a need for charter schools.

Hotel's views on school choice and school voucher, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers were partially aligned with their political party's policy platform.

We have school choice right now. I believe in school choice as a parent you have the choice to pick. I do not believe we take money from public education and give it to private. There are 5.3 million students in this state, 91% of them go to public school... No, no, no, no [school voucher program]...[HB 21]- I voted for it. We definitely need to revamp on how we finance public schools and make it fairer for every student. We are not going to get property tax relief until we reform the property tax that has to do with education. [SB 1882]-I voted for it. If we are going to have charter schools, we need to be working together. It's my desire that if we are going to have charter schools that we have the same rulebook for public schools and charter schools. [HB 21 Amendment]-I voted against it. As a former school board member, as a parent, you are going to be very critical of any program, you are never going to please everybody. We believe that through our special education program, we do as good as anyone with an autistic student.

Political ideology had a moderate influence on Legislator Hotel, as support for school choice was platform consistent, while opposition to school vouchers was not platform

consistent. The legislator's residents were split in regards to support for public schools and support of charter schools.

Yes, they do. We do have a number of private schools. We have a number of public schools...Most of them don't support charter schools.

Legislator India, Urban Democrat

Legislator India, urban democrat, described their background in the legislature and type of district currently represented (urban). Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of attending public schools (K-12) and sending their children to public schools.

The educational policy platform of their political party opposed school choice and the use of public tax money for the support of private and sectarian schools (www.texasdemocrats.org, 2016). The legislator's perceptions on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers were aligned with the party's platform. The legislator's definition of school choice and support hinged on whether a charter school is within the traditional ISD.

School choice is tricky. It means different things. I think that different kids need different approaches. I think that public schools need to provide that choice. In Austin, we have different ways of doing that. One example is [...] Independent School within [...] ISD and those kids for whom high school just doesn't work. They go there and they take classes on their own time and a lot of home study. And they have the highest college acceptance rate. Second highest in the district. I don't there's a one size fits all approach that works... No to establishing a school voucher program... [HB 21]-Yes, it's a step in the right direction. More money for my public schools. [SB 1882]-I did not support that. [HB 21 Amendment]-No.

Political ideology's influence on Legislator India was prevalent and their perceptions and actions were in line with their constituent's views.

Yes, the residents support public schools. Most residents do not [support charter schools].

Legislator Juliet, Urban Democrat

Legislator Juliet, urban democrat, described their background in the legislature and type of district represented. Previous interview responses from this legislator revealed a background of attending both private and public schools and having an established working relationship with local charter schools.

Urban district...I mainly went to public schools. I went to private school 2nd and 3rd grade. Public school throughout the rest...I think charter schools also do a good job...I have charter schools in my district and I've seen good outreach as well.

The legislator's views on school choice and school vouchers, and actions (HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment votes) regarding school choice and school vouchers were aligned with the political party's policy platform.

I believe in the public-school system. I would probably lean more against school choice than for it. Charter schools come to mind when I hear the term school choice. If kids have the choice to go charter school you are going to see a lot of movement and I've got to consider what that does to public schools...I am against school vouchers. [HB 21]-I voted for it because it's a good step forward in public school finance in the state of Texas. [SB 1882]-I voted for it. [HB 21 Amendment]-I voted against it.

Political ideology influenced Legislator Juliet and his views were in line with district constituents.

Political Ideology Summary

According to participants, a legislator's political ideology had the least influence on their perceptions of public and charter schools. The legislator's political party and its policy platform did not have a significant influence on their actions. The district demographics, constituent's views, and personal background in the public school system were the main variables influencing legislators. A legislator (seen more in republican legislators responses) not following their party's platform on school choice and the creation of a school voucher program, was more prevalent in the interview responses.

Chapter Four Summary

Chapter four explored the responses to the first research question regarding the influence of various themes on the perceptions, actions, and votes of the legislator participants. Based on the legislator's responses to the interview questions, the theme of life experiences had the largest influence on a legislator's perceptions of public and charter schools educational policies. The theme with the second highest influence on a legislator's perceptions was background. The theme with the least influence on a legislator's perceptions was political ideology. Participating legislators were willing to break from their political party's policy platform to support their constituents and personal viewpoints.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis, Research Question 2

The second research question reviewed the influence of perceptions and district demographics on three legislative bills. The first bill, HB 21 (passed with 94-46 votes), increased funding for public schools by \$351 million, and was passed with some controversy due to the \$120 million included for charter and public school facilities. The second bill, SB 1882, passed with 115-30 votes, relates to ISD's partnering with charter schools to operate campuses, encourage cooperation, and share education resources. The third bill, HB 21 with an amendment, failed with 47-89 votes, instructed the conference committee to consider all methods of education choice (charter and private schools) and financing (vouchers) for special needs students. Upon review of the data, settings (district demographics) had a greater influence over legislator's support or opposition to the three legislative bills. Perceptions also influenced legislator's votes, although to a lesser extent according to the interview responses.

The table below displays the themes for the research questions in this study and their score based on the responses of the participating legislators.

Table 1: Themes

Theme	Definition	Theme frequency	Source of theme	Research Question #1	Research Question #2
Settings	District demographics, constituents' perspective	104	B&B		X
Life Experiences	Childhood & present-day experiences	93	Stone	X	
Perceptions	Personal perceptions of public & charter schools	88	B&B		X
Background	Hometown demographics, teachers, mentors	77	B&B	X	
Participation	Participation in the education system, process	76	Lofland	X	
Relationships	Immediate family, teachers, and constituents	67	B&B	X	
Meanings	Mentorships, vision, and outlooks	57	Lofland	X	
Activities	Political, educational, and community involvement	55	B&B	X	
Political Ideology	Political party, party platforms	32	Stone	X	

Note. Table repeated from Chapter 4 for reference.

Urban Regime Theory

Stone's urban regime theory (2015) examined how the relationships between public officials, school administrators, and civic leaders impacted school policies. The themes of 'governance versus government' (stakeholders within and outside governing institutions), power (exists at all levels of participation and must be collaborative), and leadership (anyone who can inspire teamwork and build partnerships) are the three pillars of Stone's regime theory. For 'government versus governance,' Stone discussed the different roles of 'actors' within and outside of the formal governing institutions. Examples include advocacy groups for teachers, advocacy groups for school choice, and school administrators. Also, members of a school's PTA or alumni/booster organizations can also influence the policy direction of a school district.

Stone described ‘power’ as existing at all levels of schools and the importance of being patient while attempting to affect change. Examples of ‘leadership’ impacting educational policies include school board trustees, principals, union leaders, and PTA officers. Further review of the ‘leadership’ pillar indicates that the ability to build coalitions is critical to influencing the actions of public officials. The principles of Stone’s urban regime theory apply to the educational public policies that are being introduced and voted on by the Texas legislature. The interview responses from the participants reflected the three pillars as described by Stone and their influence on HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment.

Influence of Settings

According to legislators, settings greatly influenced their support or opposition to public and charter school legislation to a greater degree than their perceptions. Several interview questions dealt with settings:

- Questions one through three were specific questions discussing the legislators’ time in the House of Representatives, the type of demographics of the district they currently represent, and the types of schools they attended.
- Questions four and five focused on their elementary, middle, and high school settings to include teachers and mentors who worked there.
- Question eleven focused on the views of the legislator’s constituents about public and charter schools. The legislator’s district serves as a modern day setting that influences his or her votes and actions while in session.

- Question fifteen asked the legislator about their votes on three pieces of legislation influencing public and charter schools and school vouchers.

This chapter expands on the legislators' comments on settings.

Legislator Alpha, Rural Republican

As indicated previously, Legislator Alpha, is a rural republican and a public school graduate. The responses by Legislator Alpha revealed the settings of a legislator from a rural district, who spent his K-12 school years in a traditional public school. The positive influence of the teachers in elementary, middle, and high school settings is reflected in the answers to questions four and five.

Legislator Alpha revealed the amount of support residents in his district give to the local public and charter schools. Earning the support of constituents is based on a legislator's ability to fight for the issues important to the community. A legislator's district is an important part of the settings theme, as it is the place to earn votes for re-election. Residents measure their representative's performance on the positions they take on important votes. Public school teachers living in a legislative district may not be in support of the establishment of a school voucher system and will judge their representative's based on their votes impacting vouchers. Question eleven asked if residents in their legislative district support public and charter schools. Legislator Alpha's response indicated a strong level of support for their public schools and a lack of support for charter schools.

Legislator Alpha's settings had the strongest influence on his support or opposition to the legislative bills reviewed.

Legislator Bravo, Urban Democrat

The responses by Legislator Bravo revealed the settings of a first term legislator from an urban and rural district, who spent his K-12 school years in a traditional public school. The influence of the teachers in elementary, middle, and high school settings are reflected in the answers to questions four and five. Discrimination was a part of the settings Legislator Bravo had to overcome while in school, yet even with this type of setting, his support for traditional public schools was not dimmed.

I had a great second grade teacher that left an impression on my life... The public schools in the area I was raised unfortunately at that point in time because there was so much discrimination, they did not have a great environment. But from then to now it has changed completely.

Bravo also revealed strong support residents gave to the local public schools and the low support given to charter schools. Constituents' support of their local public school should be reflected in a legislator's policy stances and votes while serving. The pressure from constituents can ease any negative feelings or memories harbored by the legislator from childhood. Legislator Bravo's settings in childhood could have derailed future perceptions of public schools, however, the community's support influenced a more positive perception of the local public schools.

Legislator Charlie, Urban Democrat

The responses by Legislator Charlie reveal the settings of a first term legislator from an urban district, who spent her K-12 school years in a traditional public school.

The influence of the teachers in elementary, middle, and high school settings are reflected in the answers to questions four and five. According to Legislator Charlie, there were no teachers or mentors in her school settings that provided guidance. A coach from high school provided the only guidance during her senior year. A school that was majority-minority provided a setting of caring individuals who had high expectations of their students.

Legislator Charlie previously discussed the support constituents give to the local public and charter schools. There is support for both types of educational institutions from parents due to the ability of a charter school to educate children who faced challenges in traditional public schools. This type of setting in her legislative district fostered a positive perception of charter schools that is a break from her political party's platform.

Legislator Charlie's settings (constituent's support of public and charter schools) provided her the ability to support both types of institutions, yet the legislator did not vote for the HB 21 Amendment due to her belief that charter school accountability standards were not equal to traditional public schools.

Legislator Delta, Mixed District Republican

The responses by Legislator Delta revealed the settings of a second term legislator from a mixed urban and rural district, who spent K-12 school years in a traditional public school. The influence of the teachers in those public school settings is reflected in the answers to questions four and five. According to Legislator Delta, there were teachers who showed they loved and cared for their students. A prior setting in life consisted of

serving as a school board trustee and representing a district where there aren't many charters located.

I was on the school board and I've worked within and among public schools... My perception toward charter schools remains to be seen. We will see how they perform, we don't have many in the district.

Legislator Delta discussed the support constituents give to the local public, charter, and private schools. There is support for all three types of educational institutions from parents due to parents having an open mind when it comes to school choice. The legislator believes that school choice exists already in the district, thus he is able to support legislation that could benefit any of the three types of institutions. Although constituents have an open mind toward charter and private schools, the legislator did not vote for the HB 21 Amendment due to uncertainty about school vouchers. The legislator's settings did not influence his support on that legislative amendment.

Legislator Delta's settings provided the 'political cover' to support school choice and vouchers, but that has not translated to his actions or votes on school vouchers.

Legislator Echo, Suburban Republican

The responses by Legislator Echo revealed the settings of a legislator from a mixed urban and rural district, who spent K-12 school years in a traditional public school. The influence of the teachers in those public school settings is reflected in his answers to questions four and five. According to Legislator Echo, there was one teacher in the high school setting that introduced the legislator to the possibility of graduate school. This positive support structure and strong academic environment led Legislator Echo to a perception high school was more challenging than graduate school. This supportive

childhood setting influenced his support of public school policies in the legislature, however, his religious beliefs have also led to frustration with the public school system.

Legislator Echo discussed the lack of support his constituents give to the local charter schools, while emphasizing that the local public schools receive considerable support. Although his constituents overwhelmingly support the local public schools, Legislator Echo was open to the creation of a school voucher program with the right accountability standards in place.

Yes, my schools are heavily supported by district residents. I think I only have one charter school in my district and I'm not even sure where it is. [HB 21]- I voted for it. I think it's important that we properly fund public schools. [SB 1882]-I think it's important that they cooperate. One of the things that I am aware of which frustrates me is when a school district has a building available that they could sell and the charter school needs a building, and they are looking to buy. And the public-school district refuses to sell it to them because they don't want the competition. [HB 21 Amendment]-Again I'm ok with that as long as my conditions of oversight and accountability are maintained and consistent.

Legislator Echo's settings display a supportive structure for the public school system. However, the religious background of Legislator Echo has influenced his perceptions regarding religious freedoms at public schools. This lack of support for religious freedom has influenced the legislator to possibly support the creation of a school voucher program under the right conditions.

Legislator Foxtrot, Urban Democrat

The responses by Legislator Foxtrot revealed the settings of a legislator from an urban district, who spent K-12 school years in both a private and public school. The influence of the teachers in her public school settings are reflected in the answers to questions four and five. According to Legislator Foxtrot, there was one math teacher in

high school who encouraged them to take schooling seriously. The legislator's private school settings experience did not influence support for school choice and school vouchers.

Foxtrot discussed the support constituents gave to both public and charter schools.

Although her constituents support both public and charter schools, the legislator is not supportive of the creation of a school voucher program.

Yes, my residents support public schools. I'm certain that some of them do support charter schools. [HB 21]-I was voting in favor of public schools. [SB 1882]-Part of the charter school law allows a public school, an ISD, to actually start up their own charter schools. I am not in disagreement with that. I think that if a charter schools works within the system of the ISD I am supportive of it. If it's independent I am not because they are not regulated the way they need to be. I voted for it. [HB 21 Amendment]-Against.

Legislator Foxtrot's settings provided for the opportunity to support school choice and school vouchers, however the legislator is focused on fixing the finance system for traditional public schools. The legislator's settings influenced her to be supportive of public school policies and have a cautious approach toward charter schools.

Legislator Golf, Urban Republican

The responses by Legislator Golf reveal the settings of a legislator from a suburban district, who spent K-12 school years in a traditional public school. According to Legislator Golf, there was a debate coach in high school who encouraged them to sharpen his debate skills. The influence of this setting was lifelong, as the legislator credits this debate coach for preparing him to serve in elected office as an adult. This teacher also inspired Legislator Golf to begin a debate team and serve as its coach for many years.

Legislator Golf discussed the support constituents gave to both public and charter schools. The legislator's responses indicated strong support for traditional public schools, and a lack of interaction with charter schools due to the low number located in his legislative district.

One of my school districts, the [...] largest school district in the state, we have three very strong school districts. My perception of charter schools is that I really don't have any direct experience with them... Definitely [residents support of public schools] yes. Not overtly [residents support charter schools].

Legislator Golf's is a strong proponent of public schools due to the settings he was raised in and the current support from his district's residents for public schools.

Legislator Hotel, Urban Republican

Legislator Hotel discussed the support constituents given to both public and charter schools. The legislator's responses indicated strong support for traditional public schools and private schools, and a low number of charter schools resulting in low support from constituents. The three legislative bills analyzed reflect his strong support for traditional public schools, as well as support for school choice. His support of school choice ultimately does not lead to support for the establishment of a school voucher program.

Legislator Hotel's settings influenced his support for legislation benefiting public schools, while opposing legislation that would positively influence charters and private schools. The legislator's childhood settings and modern-day influenced his actions during the legislative session.

[HB 21]-I voted for it. We definitely need to revamp on how we finance public schools and make it fairer for every student. [SB 1882]- I voted for it. If we are

going to have charter schools, we need to be working together. [HB 21 Amendment]-I voted against it. As a former school board president, as a parent, you are going to be very critical of any program, You are never going to please everybody.

Legislator Hotel's settings are also influencing his view as to the role as a state legislator.

I am here to advocate for the, not the privileged, but the under-privileged and that is my role as a legislator.

Legislator India, Urban Democrat

Legislator India's district settings includes constituents who support public schools, and also having a majority of constituents who do not support charter schools. The legislator's votes on the three legislative bills reflected opposition to both SB 1882 and the HB 21 Amendment. The legislator's actions in the legislature have been heavily influenced by her life experiences and settings while in public school. The answer to question six, regarding perceptions of charter schools, provided some clarification on the legislator's lack of support for charter school public policies.

Yes, the residents support public schools. Most residents do not [support charters]...[HB 21]-Yes, it's a step in the right direction. More money for my schools. [SB 1882]-I did not support that. [HB 21 Amendment]-No...My perception of charter schools is they able to only let in kids and only keep in kids that are serious about studying and it creates an environment that easier to teach in and easier to learn in for those students.

Legislator India's settings during her upbringing, and now as a state legislator, have influenced her actions positively toward public schools, while holding back support for policies benefiting charter schools.

Legislator Juliet, Urban Democrat

Legislator Juliet revealed the amount of support his residents in the district give to the local public and charter schools. Given his residents' strong support of the local public schools, this legislator has the ability to fight aggressively for their causes without the fear of political backlash. Yet, Legislator Juliet choose to work closely with both public and charter schools. The legislator described his outreach efforts and perceptions toward both as positive.

Strongly support public schools. Some residents do support charter schools...My perception is positive [for public schools]...I work closely with my schools [charter schools]. According to some of the ratings, I have some schools that are below the average and need work. The charter schools have good outcomes and good ratings so my perception is positive overall.

Legislator Juliet's votes on educational policy issues does reflect support for both types of schools, however, the legislator is not supportive of school vouchers in Texas. The legislator's responses on school choice reflected a concern for the influence of charter schools on the public school system.

If kids have the choice to go charter school you are going to see a lot of movement and I've got to consider what that does to public schools.

Legislator Juliet's settings, during his K-12 school years and today as a state legislator, influenced his support of educational policies more favorably for public schools.

Although this legislator's responses indicated openness to the efforts of charter schools located in his district.

Settings Summary

How do a legislator's perceptions and district demographics influence support or opposition to legislation on public and charter schools? According to participants, a

legislator's settings had the greatest influence on their support of public and charter school legislation. The settings theme focused on seven specific questions discussing their time in the House of Representatives, the demographics of the district they currently represent, and the types of schools they attended. Also examined were their elementary, middle, and high school settings to include teachers and mentors, and the views of the legislator's constituents on public and charter schools. The legislator's district serves as a modern day setting that influences his or her votes and actions while in session. The participating legislators votes on the three pieces of legislation were also reviewed to determine the influence of the settings theme. Legislators are representatives of the residents from the cities and towns (settings) that elect them. Their ability to adapt to their district's settings, combined with the settings during their upbringing, provide the strongest influence on their actions during the legislative session. The results provided a clear example of Stone's regime theory, which focuses on the influence of various education stakeholders on the creation of educational public policies.

Perceptions

According to participating legislators, perceptions had the second strongest influence on support or opposition to legislation influencing public and charter schools. The perceptions theme is defined as personal perceptions or interpretations of public and charter schools, public and charter schools located in their districts, parent's perceptions of their childhood schools, evolved perceptions as an adult, perceptions of public school criticisms, and their opinions regarding the future of public and charter schools in Texas. A legislator's perceptions and interpretations have been shaped over a lifetime by life

experiences, backgrounds, and childhood settings of their school system. A lack of experience with charter schools can influence a legislator's perceptions negatively. Many of the interview participants have a negative perception of charter schools based on their lack of knowledge/interaction with them.

Perceptions are reality

Several interview questions dealt with perceptions:

- Questions six and seven focused on the legislator's overall perceptions of public and charter schools, their perceptions of public and charter schools in the area in which they were raised, and the area they currently represent.
- Questions eight and nine asked about their parent's perceptions of the local public and charter school systems.
- Questions fourteen and sixteen examined if legislators believed public schools are blamed unfairly and asked for their outlook on public and charter schools in Texas.

Legislator Alpha, Rural Republican

Legislator Alpha's responses reflected a positive perception toward public schools. The legislator's charter school responses were influenced by the lack of charter schools physically located in the district.

Legislator Alpha also discussed whether his perceptions of public and charter schools have evolved or changed, as the legislator became an adult. Life experiences can affect the perceptions of a legislator and possibly change their entire outlook on public or

charter schools. In addition, one interview question asked if a legislator believed public schools are targeted for undue criticisms, followed by why they perceived that.

I have noticed and realizing more the value of public schools in our community as I have gotten older. You see the positive influence they have on young people and also the communities themselves... I think so [public schools unfairly targeted or blamed] simply because they compare numbers between a private school and a public school. And those are not apples to apples. Different students go there. Public schools are required to accept all students. So, public schools don't get a choice of who goes there and who doesn't. The comparison of those numbers is not an equal comparison.

Alpha gave his assessment on the future of public and charter schools in Texas.

I think public schools are going to continue to be the lifeblood of our communities across the state. I think they are going to continue to educate and prepare the next generation of workers for our state and they continue to do a great job in doing that.

Legislator Alpha's interview responses revealed a positive perception of public schools, influenced by the legislator's own life experiences. The legislator's votes on the three legislative bills were influenced by perceptions, as the legislator voted for the bill in support of public schools (HB 21) and against the school vouchers amendment (HB 21 Amendment).

Legislator Bravo, Urban Democrat

Legislator Bravo, urban democrat, described his perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of his childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

I think public schools are the only way to go. Our tax dollars should not go to pay for somebody else to profit from a child getting an education that is not equivalent to that, but is still offered in the public school system... In the area I represent, the public schools do a fantastic job, not just in teaching the curriculum, but also opening the minds of children to other areas in life with science and technology. The charter schools do not open their doors to those that are special needs students and those that have behavioral problems.

The legislator's responses reflected a positive perception toward public schools and described them as "the only way to go." The legislator's charter school responses are negative as his perceptions are that charter schools are only educating children for financial gain. The issue of lenient or varying accountability standards in charter schools is part of a larger national debate and is influencing Texas legislators.

Legislator Bravo also described the evolution of his perceptions on public and charter schools and described how the number of charter schools has increased in the area. Lobbying by charter school advocates is a cause of concern for this legislator, due to the influence it is having on other legislator's actions.

My perceptions have changed because there were no charter schools when I was in school and charter schools have appeared since then and my perceptions have changed drastically.

Interview question sixteen attempted to gain his perspective on the future of public and charter schools in Texas. Bravo mentioned the lobbying on behalf of the charter school industry and the negative influence it will bring on the future of public schools.

Because of the money-power and influence that charter schools have, they are going to sooner or later start taking over one district at a time until either the funding is split down the middle or they take over the school systems.

Legislator Bravo's responses reflect a positive perception toward public schools. The legislator's votes on the three legislative bills have been influenced by his perceptions. A supportive vote on HB 21 and against the school vouchers amendment (HB 21 Amendment) displayed his strong support for traditional public schools.

Legislator Charlie, Urban Democrat

Legislator Charlie, urban democrat, described her perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of her childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

My perception of public schools is that public schools are very important to our society's infrastructure because when you look at the educational environments they create our astronauts, our engineer, [and] our political figures. As well as public schools bring about the community engagement piece that is important and keeps people talking together. I am a strong proponent of traditional public schools... Traditional public schools had not been meeting the needs of all kids and we don't need any kids to fail. Charters were the safety net and I thought public charters are a genius idea. I am very optimistic and hopeful for what charter schools can do, have done, and will continue to do... The local public and charters schools I currently represent are really struggling with how they meet state accountability compliance.

The legislator's answers reflect a positive perception toward both public and charter schools. The legislator's outlook toward charter schools are the strongest seen in the ten interviewed legislators. This openness to charter schools is furthered discussed in the settings theme of the study, as her constituents are openly supportive of charters schools. The legislator's perceptions of the public schools she attended are positive and she credits various figures that had high expectations of her. Legislator Charlie's mother was active in the local PTA leading to strong support from her mother for childhood public schools. Her mother's perceptions ultimately did not influence Legislator's Charlie's perceptions.

My mother had a very positive perception and was actively engaged in the PTA. She was also there when we needed her and when the school needed her... My mother's perception did not really affect my perception because I didn't connect the dots in terms of how she felt about public schools and how I felt about them.

Legislator Charlie revealed a change in perceptions toward both institutions during her adult years. This change has been to the benefit of both types of schools and can be credited to her enthusiasm and “love” for charter schools.

Yes, my views toward both institutions have changed. Both positively for both types of schools.

Legislator Charlie’s outlook for public and charter schools reflected a near-certain outlook of Texas with charter schools. The legislator’s response references her constituent’s support for charters and a strong political will for charter schools.

No doubt we have to protect our public schools, so I think they are only going strengthen and grow and as we are having more conversation I think we will get better. As it relates to charter schools, I believe that charters are here to stay. They have been seen as a quasi-public environment that I think is good. And I think parents have shown that they love charters, the results have shown charters are successful if they run properly. I believe there is a political will and community will to maintain charters for the future of Texas.

Legislator Charlie’s responses reflected a positive perception for public and charter schools, strongly influenced by the support for charters by her constituents. The legislator’s affirmative votes on the two legislative bills (HB 21 and SB 1882) have been influenced by perceptions, however, the legislator voted against the school voucher amendment due to a concern about those dollars going to private schools.

Legislator Delta, Mixed-District Republican

Legislator Delta, mixed-district republican, described his perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of his childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

My perception of public schools is very positive...I have a very positive outlook toward them and I really believe that many of them [teachers] think of education

as a ministry and that's what they are there for and not for the paycheck...[Charter school perceptions]-Until now kind of a mystery. Who are they? What are those? I think there are some that do a really good job and I think there are some that are just in it for the money.

Legislator Delta's response display a strong positive perception toward public schools, while his perceptions of charter schools were negative due to some charters that have not been successful and were only in existence for financial gain. The legislator's positive perceptions of public schools are also partially attributed to his perceived work ethic of public school employees. He believes they are teaching for the greater good or "ministry" and not a paycheck.

Legislator Delta's mother was also a public school teacher, thus leading to positive perceptions from both of his parents. His parent's perceptions played a role in the formulation of his positive perceptions for public schools.

My parents always had a very positive perception. Again, my mother taught in public schools, not always at the school I was at. They always had a positive outlook...Yes possibly [influenced his perceptions]. They did not complain a whole lot about it. It was one of those deals where if things went wrong, it wasn't because of my teachers, it was my fault. It was what did I not do, what did I not contribute, was I doing the best I could?

Legislator Delta discussed a significant change in his perceptions toward both types of school systems. The legislator's interactions with charter schools was the main factor that changed his perceptions of charter schools. This type of educational outreach by charter schools to legislators has been discussed previously in this study. Its positive influence was seen in the responses from Legislator Delta.

Yes they have [perceptions evolved]. Really gaining knowledge about what charter schools are. What they do and how they operate. Just gaining that

knowledge has changed my perception. I think there are those out there that do a really good job, but we have to make sure that they do.

Legislator Delta's vision for the future of public and charter schools in Texas reflected a desire to move away from standardized testing. The legislator's responses indicated an openness to increasing funding for charter schools from the state, and an increase in various dynamic approaches used to measure the effectiveness of public schools.

I think that we are hearing from parents, teachers, administrators, kids, legislators, that we need to move away from this STARR test focused education and move back to what we used to do when we got it right years ago. I think that people are realizing that if it's going to be important to us, then we got to put our dollars there. Our priorities are shown by where we put our money and we have to make it a priority and I am hoping that we move in that direction and our state contributions will increase. We will figure out a way to publicly fund our schools and hopefully charters schools are doing a great job and will be rewarded and recognized and grow. And those that aren't will go away. Same for our public schools. We got to figure out a way to hold them accountable without completely altering the culture of how we teach our kids. Try to find a way to really give us a true picture of what our kids are learning and how schools are adding value to our students.

Legislator Delta's responses reflected a positive perception for both public and charter schools and his votes are in line with the other nine participating legislators. The legislator's votes on the three legislative bills (HB 21, SB 1882, HB 21 Amendment) have been influenced by his perceptions in a positive way for public schools.

Legislator Echo, Suburban Republican

Legislator Echo, suburban republican, highlighted his perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of his childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

My perception of public schools is generally good. I have a good perception of public schools. I don't think they are perfect, but I think generally they do a good

job...I don't know as much about charter schools. It seems to me that some of them are highly effective. Statistics look good, but I don't really have a personal first-hand experience. I don't know anyone whose kids go to a charter school. My kids don't go to a charter school...Very good perception [public schools in his legislative district]. I am very blessed to represent [...] ISD and [...] ISD both of which are highly rated by TEA. People actually move to my district to take advantage of the public school systems in my district. So, I'm very proud of the public schools I represent.

Legislator Echo's responses reflected a positive perception for public schools. This perception was enhanced due to the academic performance of his childhood public schools and his current legislative district's public schools. The legislator's perceptions of charter schools are neutral as explained by a lack of "first-hand experience," but stated his perception that some charter schools are highly effective.

Legislator Echo's parent's perceptions did have an influence on his perceptions of public schools. The legislator's parent's decision to keep the legislator in public schools was due to the challenging environment it presented.

My parents told me that had we continued to live in the sort of downtown-area I would have gone to private school. The reason I went to public school is because we lived in [...] ISD. That school was better than most expensive private schools.

Legislator Echo revealed a perception change as an adult due to the religious restrictions placed on public school students and environments. This legislator has two children and religious beliefs are the main reason why the children will not be attending public school.

A lot of my difficulties with public schools center around two things, which I think are pretty much beyond the public schools control. One [of] the ridiculous restrictions we put on them-testing, curriculum standardization. The second one is the political climate that we live in today is such that a person of faith, and I know that people disagree, I do think that it is difficult in the public school system to be a person of faith.

Legislator Echo's outlook for the future of public and charter schools in Texas revealed a future with public schools becoming more like charter schools, including a higher emphasis of innovation placed on traditional public school districts.

I actually think that the charter schools present a unique opportunity for public schools to take on new ideas and innovate. And I really think that as this goes on and on, I expect to see our public school system in some of the ways, management, tools, techniques, and things that are done. I guess I almost look at charter schools as a laboratory for innovation for public schools. I believe the public schools of the future are going to look more and more like a charter school.

Legislator Echo's responses revealed a connection between perceptions of both types of schools and his votes on the three examined pieces of legislation. The legislator showed a break from the other nine interview respondents regarding the potential of school vouchers being established in Texas. The legislator supported both HB 21 and SB 1882, while expressing vocal support for HB 21 Amendment. The legislator's positive perceptions of public schools led to support for more funding through HB 21, though support for school vouchers stemmed from his belief in the right for religious expression in schools.

Legislator Foxtrot, Urban Democrat

Legislator Foxtrot highlighted her perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of her childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

Currently I believe that public schools are underfunded. What I like about public schools is obviously that the Texas constitution requires that everybody be educated and that it is free. So, my perception of public school is positive. They don't get enough money to educate and to perform the mission that they are required to do...I can't say that I have a good perception of charter schools because we do not have that many charter schools in our community and the ones we do, have not led to any better or positive outcomes with our student population...I had positive perceptions [childhood public schools]. I think that we

have some strong public schools [legislative district]. Not all of them are as strong as I would like them to be. But I do think there are limitations, because again, going back to the public funding of public schools.

Legislator Foxtrot's perception of public schools was positive due to their constitutional mandate to provide education services to all members of the community. The legislator's perception of charter schools in her legislative district was negative due to the lack of locations, and their 'underwhelming' academic achievements. A consistent reference to the lack of funding by the State of Texas gave insight as to why this legislator believed some public schools are not successful.

Legislator Foxtrot's parent's perceptions of public and charters schools were limited due to the lack of charter schools in the area. The legislator highlighted that their perceptions of public and charter schools have been formed solely due to their own life experiences and research.

Positive [parents' perceptions of public schools]...Not toward charter schools because I think that charter schools again, is something that is so fairly new in our community. Now there are, and so my perceptions now on the schools are based on my own research and what I understand and knowledge about the way they exist.

Legislator Foxtrot discussed a change in her perceptions of charter schools as an adult and is now more informed of their accountability standards and funding streams. The legislator's perceptions of public schools have not changed as an adult however, her perceptions of the legislature's support of public schools have changed after serving in the Texas House.

They have evolved in regards to charter schools. I think I am a lot more informed with regard to how they are regulated and how they are funded. My perceptions toward public schools have not changed...Now with my experiences in the

legislature, I think that we have a body that actually is very receptive to public schools.

Legislator Foxtrot's outlook for the future of public and charter schools in Texas described a desire for public and charter schools to work together. The legislator briefly discussed the main funding source for public schools (property taxes) and a need for increased funding from the state. An increase in regulations for charter schools was another part of Legislator Foxtrot's vision for the Texas education system.

I think that because of the legislation that is being proposed, I think that they do need to work together. With regard to the future of public schools, I think that they need to be financed, there has to be a better financing system for them. It should not be coming mostly from property taxes. With regards to charter schools, I think that there needs to be more regulations, if they are going to continue to exist, that they have to be much more similar to the way public schools are regulated.

Legislator Foxtrot's perceptions and votes on the three examined pieces of legislation were aligned. The legislator supported more funding for public schools in HB 21 and greater cooperation between the two in SB 1882, and stated a one-word answer of "against" in regards to the school vouchers.

Legislator Golf, Urban Republican

Legislator Golf, suburban republican, shared his perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of his childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

My perception of charter schools is that I really don't have any direct experience with them...It was great-elementary, middle, and high school [perceptions of childhood schools].

Legislator Golf had a positive perception of public schools, which is the result of having "very strong school districts" in the area he represents. Once again, the lack of charter

schools located in the district has contributed to a neutral perception of them. The legislator referenced the area superintendent's unfavorable opinion of charter schools, but does not signify any personal negative perceptions of them.

Legislator Golf's parent's perceptions of public schools were positive, yet the legislator indicated they had no influence on his perceptions of public schools. The legislator also revealed that his children attended private school where the legislator served as a coach.

My parents had a positive perception of public schools...No [did parent's perceptions influence him]. I am a parent. My children attended private school.

Legislator Golf discussed a change in perceptions toward public schools due to an increased emphasis on standardized testing. The legislator also stated concerns with class sizes and the overall size of public school campuses.

I think individuals' perceptions have changed. I think we have made them much more bureaucratic. We have taken focus off the teacher in teaching with all the standardized tests and the requirements we put on teachers. I think class sizes are too large and ISD's are way too large and schools are too large.

Legislator Golf's opinion on the future of public and charter schools focused on the need to diversify educational goals for students in school. Examples of this included placing emphasis on some non-traditional courses after high school, such as vocational schools or serving in the military.

I think we need to give our attention to the students. I think we need to re-focus our attention on the students and preparing each student for whatever their future is, be it college, vocational school, military, or a career.

The influence of perceptions on Legislator Golf was evident on the three examined pieces of legislation. The legislator voted to support the increased funding for public schools in HB 21, and voted for greater cooperation in SB 1882. The legislator's lack of interaction contributed to the "no opinion" perceptions of charter schools, and ultimately led to a vote of "no" to school vouchers.

Legislator Hotel, Urban Republican

Legislator Hotel, urban republican, shared his perceptions of public and charter schools.

I believe that public schools are important of our country, our state. I think that we have too much influence from the governmental side. From the state and federal side. We should allow them to have more local control...[I have] a positive perception [of public schools]...I believe that charter schools are fine as long as they go by the same rules as the regular schools. As long as they have to accept the same people. That can't be specific and pick and choose who they want to be in their school...Perception was very good [public schools from his childhood]. There weren't choices. There were choices but they weren't locally...We have good public schools in our area [current legislative district] and we have a few charter schools that are options for those. I am opposed to school choice when it comes to money, but I am not opposed to school choice when it comes to an option for a parent.

Legislator Hotel's had a positive perception of public schools, which was the result of serving as a trustee and his spouse serving as a public school teacher. The themes of life experiences and settings have shaped a positive perception of the public school system. The legislator's perceptions of charter schools reflected a recognition for the "need" of charter schools, but ultimately wanting a public school system that did not include charter schools.

Legislator Hotel's parent's perceptions of public schools were positive, yet the legislator indicated they had no influence on his perceptions of public schools. The legislator also revealed that his children attended private school where he served as a debate coach for many years.

My parents had a positive impression. My daddy developed a brain tumor and died when I was 11. There were six of us kids and my mother raised us. One thing she made very clear, was that all of us will get a college education even though we were farmers ranchers and dirt poor. She made that a high priority and we all did get college degrees...It was always positive [parents perceptions of public schools] so mine was too. Yes I am a parent. We have three children and all attended [...] ISD, my wife is a public educator in [...] ISD.

Legislator Hotel revealed no changes in perceptions toward public or charter schools as an adult. The legislator's opinions on the future of public and charter schools included a belief in the process currently in place regarding oversight and funding for both types of school systems. The legislator believed in the abilities of legislators to successfully advocate for both types of institutions.

No, they have not changed [perceptions of public and charter schools]...It looks wonderful [the future] as long as we have good legislators advocating for the public school systems.

The influence of perceptions on Legislator Hotel's votes was apparent. The legislator supported HB 21, SB 1882, and opposed the HB 21 Amendment based on his perceptions of each. According to Legislator Hotel, public schools are the ultimate answer for the education of children, while a charter school's role is to be supportive of the public schools.

Legislator India, Urban Democrat

Legislator India, urban democrat, described her perceptions of public and charter schools, perceptions of childhood schools, and current legislative district schools.

I think we are asking our public schools to do more and more with less. I think that by and large we are doing more and more. I think sometimes we put pressure in the wrong places just for the sake of putting pressure on public schools. The state does this. My perception of charter schools is they are able to only let in kids and only keep in kids that are serious about studying and it creates an environment that is easier to teach in and easier to learn in for those students...My perceptions really reflect my answers on what I think about our public schools and our charter schools [district public and charters]. My perception comes from my experience here [in the Capitol] .

Legislator India's responses listed numerous concerns regarding the demands on public schools. The legislator's perceptions of charter schools displayed a sense of dismay in regards to their admissions process. This negative perception described by India and other interview participants illustrated the need for a greater outreach and educational efforts by charter schools.

Legislator India's parents did not have favorable perceptions of the local public school, however, their perceptions did not play a role in the formulation of the legislator's positive perceptions toward public schools later in life.

Probably negative [parent's perceptions of childhood public schools]. They tried to send me to private/catholic school...I don't think so [parents influence on her perceptions].

Legislator India discussed a change in perceptions of charter schools as an adult. The lack of interaction with charter schools while growing up led to a lack of familiarity of their institutions.

Yes, I didn't know that charter schools were when I was a kid. And so, my understanding of charter schools was entirely formed as an adult.

Legislator India's vision for the future of public and charter schools in Texas was filled with uncertainty. The legislator's perceptions for public and charter schools were reflected in the votes cast during the legislative session. This legislator's votes on the three legislative bills (HB 21, SB 1882, HB 21 Amendment) revealed a clear break from the other nine participating legislators. The legislator voted against HB 21 Amendment, and also voted against the public and charter school cooperation bill, SB 1882. The legislator's negative perceptions of charter schools influenced her actions, while supporting only HB 21, which increased funding for public schools.

Legislator Juliet, Urban Democrat

Legislator Juliet, urban democrat, described his perceptions of public and charter schools.

My perception is positive. I think that public schools in our state can always do better... My perception growing up was that they were good schools [public schools]. I always felt that teachers were good. At the time I think the content, from my understanding, was good. So, my experiences were good. My perception is good [charter schools in legislative district]... The charter schools have good outcomes and good ratings, so my perception is positive overall.

Legislator Juliet's responses reflected positive perceptions for public and charter schools. The legislator's perceptions have been formed with outreach from the schools in his legislative district, and his personal efforts to gain a greater understanding of both types of institutions. The "good outcomes and good ratings" of charter schools were also contributing to his positive perceptions of charters.

Legislator Juliet's parents did have a favorable perception of the local public schools, although their perceptions did not play a role in the formulation of the legislator's perceptions of both types of institutions.

My parents have a very positive perception of the local public schools...I don't recall having conversations with my parents their perceptions of the schools. I assume they were good because they kept me in those schools.

Legislator Juliet discussed a change in perceptions of both types schools upon election to the Texas Legislature. The life experiences and settings themes have contributed significantly to his positive perceptions of both types of schools. Legislator Juliet's vision for the future of public and charter schools in Texas placed a large responsibility solely in the hands of legislators and their future votes. The legislator also indicated a vision of both types of schools working together to educate Texas' children.

I think the future in the hands of the state legislature and how much we decide to fund it. It's in our constitution. We have the obligation and the responsibility to adequately fund them. I think there is a bright future for both.

Legislator Juliet's perceptions for public and charter schools influenced his votes on the three legislative bills (HB 21, SB 1882, HB 21 Amendment), but not enough to support HB 21 Amendment. The legislator stayed in line with the other eight participating legislators by voting to increase public school funding (HB 21) and supporting cooperation between both institutions (SB 1882).

Perceptions Summary

Perceptions influenced a legislator's support for public and charter school bills in a significant way, but were referenced to a lesser degree than settings in the interview responses. A review of the responses indicated positive perceptions of public schools

both from their childhood and current legislative district. All ten of the legislators signaled strong support for his or her legislative district's public schools based on their perceptions of childhood schools and as adults.

Chapter Five Summary

Chapter five explored the responses to the second research question and determined the level of influence of various themes toward the perceptions, actions, and votes of the participants. Based on the legislator's responses to the interview questions, a legislator's settings influenced their support to a greater degree than their perceptions. The perceptions theme provided insight as to why a legislator may or may not support a certain type of educational institution. Their perceptions of their childhood school system, public and charter schools in their legislative district, parent's perceptions, and the evolution of their perceptions of both types of school systems did influence their actions and votes. The settings theme had a higher influence in this research question because of the understanding of their constituent's views toward public and charter schools. The data and findings from Chapters Four and Five will be further reviewed in Chapters Six and Seven, with additional recommendations for future research.

Chapter Six: Overarching Analysis

This study focused on the themes from both research questions. There was a total of seven themes from Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) and Lofland's (1971) coding scheme: settings, background, perceptions, participation, relationships, meanings, and activities. The themes of life experiences and political ideology were based on Stone's urban regime theory (2015). The interview responses were coded with the goal of determining the themes influencing legislators' perceptions and influencing their actions on public and charter school public policies. Although the reviewed responses focused on the themes of life experiences, background, political ideology, settings, and perceptions, the remaining four themes also influenced a legislator's actions although to a lesser degree. Participation, relationships, meanings, and activities were ranked five through eight in terms of influence to legislator' perceptions and actions. The overarching result of this study also revealed the strength and influence of personal relationships and interactions on the actions of legislators.

The "Other" Themes

Each of the ten legislators interviewed had unique upbringings, yet all of them described one or more people with whom they interacted, who ultimately changed the course of their lives. The relationship theme focused on the interactions between legislators and their community members, colleagues, mentors, and immediate family members. An example of this was from Legislator Alpha. The legislator described a mentorship from a young age by a public school teacher, which left a lifelong, positive perception of teachers and public educators.

It was all positive, I had a lot of people in public schools that encouraged us to do the best we could. Encourage us to be better and make ourselves better...I did have a 3rd grade teacher. She was one of my better teachers and really nurtured the quest for knowledge even at a young age. I still see her around and I always tell [her] she was my favorite teacher.

Although the relationships theme scored in the bottom four, it can be argued that the relationship with his teacher formed his positive perceptions, and influenced the actions of Legislator Alpha while serving in public office.

The ‘activities’ theme was also important (ranked eighth) to a legislator’s actions due to the experiences with each. While running for public office, legislators participate in numerous candidate forums, door-to-door block walking, and neighborhood association meetings. Each of these activities can heavily influence a legislator’s perceptions or votes. Keeping a pulse on the views of their constituents is imperative for a politician seeking a long tenure in public office. The amount of information gathered from residents during each of these activities can shape their legislative actions, regardless of the legislator’s upbringing and background. Running for and serving in public office can change the perceptions and actions of legislators. This is reflected in an interview answer from Legislator Juliet in which the legislator described a change of perceptions due to the act of serving in office.

Yes, [perceptions toward public and charter changed as an adult] especially once I got into the legislature, I have learned a lot more. It has opened up my eyes to the challenges public schools face. My overall perception is that they do the best they can with what they’ve got.

Activities, such as running and serving in public office, can provide new perspectives for a legislator.

The participation theme ranked fifth overall when the interview responses were coded. This theme is similar to the activities themes however, some responses provided specific examples of how participating in the education system changed various perceptions for legislators about both public and charter schools. Legislator Bravo described his childhood school settings and early experiences with public schools as negative. This legislator also revealed the example his parents set by getting involved in the public school system to correct problems such as discrimination.

I saw a lot of discrimination when I attended high school. I had some good experiences due to some of the teachers that I had that had bright influence on my life... The public schools in the area I was raised unfortunately at that point in time because there was so much discrimination, they did not have a great environment... My parent's perceptions of public schools very much influenced my views and they showed me that public schools could be corrected if there was a problem. Getting very involved in the public schools can change the system.

Legislator Bravo's effort to "get involved" in the public school system consisted of serving as a school board trustee and getting elected to the Texas House of Representatives. Participating in the political process provided this legislator an avenue to influence the priorities and policies of school districts, to include issues such as discrimination in the classrooms. The legislator's initial life experiences and childhood settings could have created a permanent negative perception toward public schools however, participation in the process has permanently changed his perceptions for the better.

The meanings theme ranked seventh in influencing a legislator's perceptions and actions toward public and charter schools. Several legislators provided insights into different actions taken at both types of schools and discussed their interpretations and

meanings of them. Legislator Delta discussed interactions with public school teachers while serving as a member of the board of trustees. The legislator's interpretation of their actions created strong positive perceptions of public schools and their teachers.

I was on the school board and I've worked within and among public schools. I have a very positive outlook toward them and I really believe that many of them think of education as a ministry and that's what they are there for and not for the paycheck. Things can always run better but I'm pretty high on our public schools.

The legislator described the actions and efforts of teachers with the religious term 'ministry.' This response was coded under the meanings theme because of the influence a teacher's work had on the legislator's mind, spirit, and perceptions.

Legislator Echo described his opinion as to whether public schools are unfairly blamed by other legislations. The legislator's response was coded under the meanings theme because it revealed an understanding of why the public school system receives undue criticism.

It's a tough question for me. I can see it both ways. They do get undue criticism. So much of what goes into the proper education of a child is beyond the school's control. Whether it be us at the legislature putting onerous restrictions on them or it be parents at home really not caring what happens.

The efforts of public school stakeholders to educate a child can sometimes be thwarted due to factors outside of their control.

Comparisons

As described previously, the interviews were conducted with ten elected Texas state legislators from each major political party (five democrats, five republicans). The legislators were identified with a name from the phonetic alphabet, their political party affiliation, and the demographics of district they represent. If this study were viewed

from 10,000-feet, there would be some overarching conclusions regarding legislators’ perceptions and their ensuing votes toward public and charter schools.

The legislators revealed strong support for traditional public schools. While studying the votes on HB 21, all ten interview participants voted in favor of increasing revenue to public schools by \$351 million dollars. When a comparison is made between the legislators, there are some differences based on their political party and district demographics.

Table 3: Votes

Bill	Brief Description	Participating Legislators’ Votes (Party)	Overall Texas House members’ Votes	Result
HB 21	School Revenue increases (\$351 million)	10-0 (R’s & D’s)	94-46	Bill passed
SB 1882	ISD contracts to partner with charter schools	9 (R’s) & (D’s)- 1 (D)	115-30	Bill passed
HB 21 Amendment	School choice with financing options (vouchers/tax credits)	0-9 (Both Parties)	47-89	Amendment Died

Republican versus Democrats on School Choice

Political party affiliation can have a significant influence on a politician’s agenda and their votes. Many votes in the legislature fall along party lines to ensure control of the public policies being debated. The party makeup of the Texas House of

Representatives is currently 95 republicans to 55 democrats. Democrats are outnumbered and would need a significant swing in the political pendulum to capture the speaker's seat during future legislative sessions. Republicans also have total control of the major statewide offices, specially the office of Lieutenant Governor and Governor. The political strength of the republican party in Texas cannot be understated, and their ability to pass legislation at-will is sometimes unstoppable. However, when it comes to the issue of education in Texas, political party is not the guiding force in a legislator's votes. While analyzing the votes of the five republican legislators, all five voted in support of HB 21.

The republican legislators all supported public schools with their affirmative vote for HB 21, yet their support of school choice was split 3-2. The democrats were more in step on school choice issues with a 4-1 vote against it. Given the clear distinctions in their party platforms toward school choice, the assumption would be that republican legislators would be solidly behind public policies that support choice school. This study revealed that assumption to be untrue. All of the republican legislators interviewed attended-12 public schools and the influence of their background is clearly seen with the school choice issue. On the democratic side, three of the five legislators attended K-12 public schools. The remaining two attending a combination of both private and public schools. This comparison of democrat and republican legislator responses reveals a break from assumptions being made about how a legislator may vote. With all ten participating legislators voting to support public schools with HB 21, there is no question that public schools have strong bi-partisan support at the Texas Capitol.

Republican versus Democrat-School Vouchers

Another trend analyzed was school vouchers and their future in Texas classrooms. Two interview questions were specific to a legislator's position and vote on the establishment of school vouchers in Texas. Participating legislators from the republican party answered the vouchers question with a margin of 4-1 against. The breakdown was the same on their votes on the HB 21 Amendment. The Texas Republican party platform is clear on its support for the establishment of a voucher program to encourage school choice. Republican legislators were again willing to break from their party platform and vote against school vouchers in Texas. Democratic legislators were again united in their support against school vouchers with all five stating their opposition to school vouchers and all five voting against the HB 21 Amendment. The Texas Democratic Party platform clearly stated opposition to the creation of school vouchers and tax credits in Texas and their party members in the legislature did not break from that.

As discovered in this study, there are many themes that led to the participating members staying in line with the party's platform or breaking away from it. Settings, life experiences, perceptions, and background all influenced a legislator's breaking from their party's platform more so than political ideology.

Cooperation between Public and Charter Schools

The final overarching trend in this study focuses on increased cooperation between public and charter schools in Texas. The comparison of responses from both participating republicans and democrats indicated the political will for both types of schools to communicate more and be better aligned with each other financially, as

opposed to competing against each other. The analysis of their votes on SB 1882 (9-1) revealed a solid majority of votes directing increased cooperation between the two. There were also responses that indicated a resignation among some legislators that charter schools are here to stay in Texas.

Both democrats and republicans recognized the importance of cooperation versus competition in children's classrooms. School districts throughout Texas have more charter schools locating within their district lines and SB 1882 helps to alleviate some concerns of outright competition.

Overarching Trends Summary

As discussed in this chapter, the overarching themes and trends indicate there is a clear mandate of support for public schools from both republic and democratic legislators participating in this study. The support for school vouchers is clearly not present as nine out of ten participating legislators do not support the establishment of a school voucher program. Finally, legislators see the financial and common-sense values of both types of schools working together for the betterment of Texas children, and their statements and votes reflect this desire.

Chapter Seven: Summary of Findings, Influence, and Further Recommendations

Chapters four and five presented the data collected from the participating legislator's interviews. Chapter six presented overall trends and additional analysis from the nine themes. Chapter seven begins with the purpose of the study, the two research questions, the methodology used to answer the study's research questions, and a summary of the findings. This chapter will also include recommendations for additional research, policy makers, and educators, and finally a conclusion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine legislators' perceptions of the quality of education in public and charter schools and what themes impact those perceptions. What influences policy maker's perceptions of both charter and public schools and what influence does it have on legislative votes? The current debate regarding the funding of public education in Texas has many legislators at odds over the introduction of school vouchers for parents to use at the school of their choice. Given the legislators' perceptions of both types of schools, is certain legislation introduced at the state level to encourage or discourage school choice and school vouchers? This research is important because it revealed portions of the thought process and motivations behind the educational public policies introduced at the Texas capitol.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were: 1) To what extent do life experiences, meanings, background, participation, relationships, activities, and political ideology of state legislators formulate perceptions leading to educational public policy? 2) How do a

legislator's perceptions and district demographics influence support or opposition to legislation on public and charter schools?

Overview of Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach to address the research questions. The study consisted of structured interviews with 10 Texas state legislators (see appendix for interview protocol). The participants represented both urban and rural districts and included members from both major political parties. The interview questions asked about perceptions, life experiences, and feelings about the educational policy direction of public and charter schools. The interview protocol focused on questions regarding a legislator's background, district demographics, terms in public office, educational mentors and teachers, parental influence, and constituent's perceptions of the public and charter school systems.

The second source of data was a review of documents and votes in relation to three educational public policy bills that were introduced and voted on during the 85th Legislative Session. Bill authors of the legislation reviewed were not interviewed for this research. The three educational policy bills and their proceeding votes from the 85th Legislative session reviewed were: House Bill 21, regarding the funding of primary and secondary education, Senate Bill 1882, regarding a traditional ISD partnering with a charter school, and HB 21-Amendment, instructing conference committee members to consider all methods of education choice and financing for special needs children. Votes by legislators were reviewed to analyze the influence of the nine themes on each of the bills.

The third data source used was field notes. Hays and Singh (2012) discussed the role of the researcher and the importance of keeping field notes and memos. These types of records are usually associated with specific data collection techniques to include interviews and observations. The researcher kept notes about each interview and observed the actions of the participants during educational policy debates.

Limitations

This qualitative study required the researcher's presence while collecting data, which can affect the subjects' responses (Anderson, 2010). As previously stated, the interviews were conducted in the House of Representatives chambers, which is a familiar setting for the legislators. This study was also limited by the issues of anonymity and confidentiality of the legislators when the findings were presented (Anderson, 2010). Legislators were asked to participate in this study with the understanding their identities would not be revealed, in order to encourage candidness in their answers. Finally, the research quality is dependent on the skills of the researcher and can be influenced by the researcher's personal viewpoints and biases (Anderson, 2010).

Serving as a member of the legislature provided the researcher a unique insider perspective. This insider relationship as a fellow House member provided the interview participants a level of comfort and openness that other researchers may not be able to attain. The interview responses were genuine and "raw" potentially due to the fact that a fellow legislator was the interviewer. This may serve as a limitation to other researchers as they may or may not be a member of the Texas legislature, and the comfort level may not be present during the interview.

Summary of Findings-Research Question 1

The findings for the Research Question 1 identified the major themes influencing state legislator's perceptions of public and charter schools. Some interview responses overlapped, specifically in the areas of life experiences and background. Both of those themes required a legislator to reflect back on their childhood, young adulthood, and parental upbringing to answer the interview questions. The theme with the highest influence on legislator's perceptions was life experiences. The second strongest theme was background. Political ideology was the theme with the least influence on legislator's perceptions of public and charter school educational policy. The following summary of themes answered Research Question 1.

Life Experiences

The theme with the highest influence on legislator's perceptions of public and charter schools was life experiences. Their perceptions of both public and charter schools are tied directly to their life experiences, which included their length of serving in public office, demographics of their legislative district, and schools attended throughout their upbringing. Specific examples were requested from legislators regarding influential teachers or mentors while in school. Their responses indicated at least one teacher, mentor, or coach in their lifetime that inspired or motivated them to pursue their educational goals.

Many legislators credit their life experiences of interacting with their constituents and the local public and charter schools for their current perceptions. One consistent answer from many of the participating legislators was their lack of interaction with

charter schools during their educational experiences and in their current capacity. This lack of life experience led to many unfavorable perceptions toward charter schools.

Background

The theme with the second highest influence on legislator's perceptions was background. The background of legislators was tied to interview protocol questions regarding their time in the House of Representatives, the type of demographics of the district they currently represent, and the types of schools they attended. Other interview questions focused on the teachers and mentors in their specific schools, and their parent's perceptions toward their childhood schools. Constituent's perceptions toward public and charter schools was the final interview question asked to determine the influence of their voter's outlooks and views toward public and charter schools. Successful elected officials are able to comprehend and integrate the background of their constituents into their overall perceptions and actions toward public and charter schools.

Highlights of their background responses included three legislators who previously served on their local school boards and two who were previously public school teachers. Half of the participating legislators had a strong background of involvement and participation in a traditional public school district, thus leading to strong positive perceptions. Other background responses revealed the influence of their parents and upbringing toward both types of educational institutions. Five legislators indicated their parent's positive perceptions toward their childhood public schools had significant influence on their views, while the other five legislators indicated a lack of a connection between their parent's perceptions and their own perceptions.

Political Ideology

Political ideology was the theme with the least influence on legislator perceptions. The interview questions contributing to the political ideology theme focused on a legislator's political party, length in the House of Representatives, beliefs toward school choice and school vouchers, and their votes on HB 21, SB 1882, and the HB 21 Amendment. Each of these questions were important due to the influence politics has on every decision a legislator makes. Legislators must initially select a political party to run for office, which leads to a general acceptance of the party's policy platform. The questions regarding their beliefs toward school choice and school vouchers were important, due to both policy issues being included in their respective party's policy platforms.

Highlights of the responses revealed strong support of the traditional public school system regardless of the legislator's political party. The Republican Party of Texas adopted a policy platform calling for the support of school choice and the creation of a school voucher program to facilitate a family's ability to choose their child(ren) schools. Of the five republican legislators interviewed, three stated their support for school choice, while two expressed opposition to it. The Texas Democratic Party adopted a policy platform stating opposition to school choice policies. The five democratic legislator's responses were against the school choice issue, although one democratic legislator stated she could support school choice if current revenues toward public schools would not be re-directed. On the issue of school vouchers being established in Texas, the Republican Party of Texas platform supports the creation of a school voucher program for Texas

families. Four of the five republican legislators interviewed were opposed to the creation of a school voucher program. The Texas Democratic Party platform called for opposition to the establishment of a school voucher program. All five of the interviewed democratic legislators stated opposition to a school voucher program.

The theme of political ideology influenced participating legislators the least when compared to the other eight themes. The participating Republican party members broke with their political party at a higher rate in regards to the school vouchers issue. They were also divided 3-2 in their support for school choice. The influence of their political party and its official platform had less influence on their policy positions and votes.

Summary of Findings-Research Question 2

The findings for Research Question 2 identified the level of influence of two themes, settings and perceptions, on a legislator's support of public and charter school legislative bills. The theme of settings had the highest influence for support or opposition to the legislative bills HB 21, SB 1882, and HB 21 Amendment. The second strongest theme influencing a legislator's support or opposition to public and charter school bills was perceptions. The following summary of themes answered Research Question 2.

Settings

The theme with the highest influence on the three examined legislative bills was settings. The settings theme had the highest reference rate of all nine themes in this study. There were seven questions measuring the influence of settings on a legislator's support or opposition toward public and charter bills. The setting questions asked about the legislator's term in office, their district demographics, and their childhood settings while

in school (public, private, or charter institutions). Their childhood teachers and mentors were also examined to determine the type of supportive educational environment while in school. The settings of their current legislative district were also examined in a question about their constituent's support for charter and public schools.

Various answers included all of the participating legislators indicating positive support from their childhood school settings. The highlights included a teacher who introduced one legislator to the idea of attending graduate school. That legislator credited that support from his public school setting for completing graduate school. All ten of the legislators attended public schools during their childhood. Two of them had some schooling in a private school setting, but it did not influence their support toward public schools or the creation of school vouchers. Each of the legislators also described the importance of the local public school district to the community. One legislator described the local public school district as the "life blood" of the community. With this type of support for public schools from their constituents, a legislator's district setting heavily influenced their votes on public and charter school bills. The settings responses from all ten participating legislators indicated a strong public school foundation, whether in their childhood or current legislative district, or both. Of the ten participating legislators, all ten voted for HB 21 to increase public school funding. On SB 1882, regarding public and charter school cooperation, nine of the legislators voted in favor of that bill. On HB 21 Amendment, nine of the participating legislators voted against school vouchers, with one participating legislator not present for the vote.

The settings of the participating legislators reflected a combination of both personal experience and legislative district support for public schools. Their actions on educational public policies are strongly influenced by their childhood and modern-day settings.

Perceptions

Perceptions influenced a legislator's support for public and charter school bills in a significant way, but were referenced to a lesser degree than settings in the interview responses. The perceptions theme reviewed the responses to interview questions regarding their personal perceptions of public and charter schools, both in the childhood hometown and in their current legislative district. The legislator's parent's perceptions toward public and charter schools were analyzed, as well as a reflection question regarding the evolution of a legislator's perceptions. The final perceptions question requested a legislator's opinion of the future of public and charter schools in Texas.

A review of the responses indicated positive perceptions of public schools both from their childhood and current legislative district. All ten of the legislators signaled strong support for his or her legislative district public schools based on their perceptions of childhood schools and as adults. The influence of a legislator perceptions of public and charter schools is apparent in their votes cast on increasing funds for public schools HB 21 (10-0), encouraging cooperation between public and charter school SB 1882 (9-1), and school vouchers for school choice HB 21 Amendment (0-9). Six of the ten legislators indicated a change in their perceptions of charters schools as they became adults. This change in perceptions was credited to more interaction due to the increase of charter

schools located in their legislative district. Although this increased interaction did not influence their support for charter schools or school choice in an overwhelming positive way, three now have an “open mind” toward the mission of charter schools.

Literature Review and Findings

Many of the participating legislators discussed the lack of understanding and interaction with charter schools located in their districts. Legislators who described their districts as rural or mixed can relate to the literature review article by Barden and Lassman (2016). The authors noted that 61% of all charter schools are located in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, and San Antonio. Having over 60% of charter schools located in the state’s highest populated cities, would explain why many of the rural and mixed district legislators have limited experience with charter schools. It would also explain why their support for public schools was based on the settings of their legislative district as opposed to party platform.

Two of the participating legislators (Bravo and India) indicated the increased presence of charter school lobbyists and advocacy groups at the Capitol. The presence of charter school stakeholders during a legislative session is helping to educate legislators on the mission of charters and their perceived effectiveness. The HB 21 Amendment regarding the potential creation of a school voucher program did not pass, however, the chances of similar voucher bills being introduced during the next legislative session is almost guaranteed due to the successes of school choice advocacy groups. The article by Bliss (2006) discussed the passage of a school voucher program in Florida and the pressures, “from established lobbies state departments of education, the media, and

various other state and national organizations,” (p, 1) placed on the state and its leadership. This article is relevant to the study due to the possible backlash members of the Texas legislature may receive, if a school voucher program was passed.

Davis and Robelen (2004) highlighted the impact of political parties on the passage of school voucher programs. The author argued that the election of more Republican legislators would increase the opportunity of a school voucher being passed at statehouses around the country. With the Texas legislature balance by party currently at 95 republicans to 55 democrats, the assumption would be that a school voucher program would have an excellent chance at passage. The results of this study refute that assumption, as nine out of ten participating legislators indicated their opposition to a school voucher program. Only one republican participant out of five, vocally endorsed the creation of a school voucher program. Political ideology had the lowest frequency school (32) of the nine themes reviewed.

Recommendations for Additional Research

This study analyzed nine themes and their influence on the two research questions. The votes on three legislative bills influencing public and charter schools were also reviewed to determine the correlation between the themes and a legislator’s ultimate actions or votes. Future researchers can build upon this study by expanding the number of legislative votes analyzed and including Texas Senate members as participants. Possible interviewees can include other educational stakeholders such as parents, superintendents, and charter school leadership. Ten legislators out of 150 in the Texas House of Representatives is a small sample size and can be expanded. Also, members of the Texas

Senate can be included in future studies to determine the influence of an increase in district size, population, and demographics to a legislator's perceptions and actions.

Recommendations for Educators

Numerous important decisions are made by legislators in the Texas legislature. It is imperative for educators and stakeholders in the education community to reach out to their legislators and educate and interact with them on a regular basis. Most legislators are not former teachers or principals, thus many of their perceptions and actions are based on their interactions with their local public and charter schools. The relationships established between stakeholders from both types of schools can have a significant impact on their actions and votes. Creating new positive life experiences while interacting with public and charter schools can change a "no" vote to a "yes" vote over time.

Both public schools and charter schools have various advocacy groups visiting the Texas capitol and the legislative districts to educate legislators on the mission of public and charter schools. Educators for both types of schools must get involved in these education efforts to ensure legislators have an open mind toward future legislation. If an educator believes that support for public schools will always be present in the legislature, then they are not comprehending the efforts of both private and charter schools to convince legislators to change their perceptions and actions. Charter school educators also need to become active in their legislative advocacy groups to ensure a legislator's lack of interaction or understanding of charter schools does not result in a "no" vote on future charter school legislation. Traditional public schools have a longer history in Texas

than charter schools and both are advocating for an increase in revenue during each legislative session. The school system receiving revenue increases will be influenced by the themes in this study and by the efforts by advocacy groups to influence those themes.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Policy makers have an obligation to become educated on all of the various stakeholders and institutions of learning in their legislative district. Reaching out to both public and charter school leadership is imperative to ensuring both types of schools have an opportunity to present their educational goals and missions. Policy makers are casting votes regularly during the legislative session and they should be attempting to become more educated on both types of schools in their districts. Charter schools are here to stay in Texas and it is best to work with them to determine opportunities for cooperation. Policy makers should also review the different accountability standards for public and charter schools and determine if they should be more uniform.

Conclusion

This study provided an insight into what influences a legislator's decisions on educational public policies. These decisions and votes have a significant financial and public policy impact on both public and charters schools. Although a legislator's vote cannot be predicted 100% of the time, various themes can influence and provide a roadmap to their actions. Each participating legislator in this study provided raw answers on their views of the Texas educational system and their thoughts on its future. Their views included a future with both public and charter schools working together to educate the children of Texas. Citizens have the responsibility to hold both policy makers and

educational institution stakeholders accountable, thus ensuring education continues to be the great equalizer for all children.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction to Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. As was mentioned in the consent form, my goal is to understand how the perception of public schools and charter schools influence educational public policy at the state level. The possible creation of a school voucher program in Texas and your thoughts toward that will also be explored. This interview will be recorded and your identity will not be disclosed in the study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Audio recording begins.

Interview Questions

1. How long have you served as a Texas state representative?
 2. What are the demographics of the district you represent (urban or rural)?
 3. Did you attend a public, private, or charter school for K-12?
 4. Are there one or two experiences while you were in school (up to 12th grade) that positively or negatively influenced your educational goals?
 5. Do you have a specific teacher and/or mentor who provided you guidance during K-12 school years?
 6. What is your perception of public schools? Perception of charter schools?
 7. What is your perception of the local public or charter school in the area in which you were raised? In the area that you represent?
 8. Did your parent(s) have a positive or negative perception of the local public or charter school?
 9. Did your parents' perceptions influence your views toward public and charter schools?
 10. Have your perceptions and views of public and charter schools changed or evolved, as you became an adult?
 11. Do the residents in your district support public schools? Charter schools? Both?
 12. Do you believe in school choice? If yes, then why?
 13. Do you believe the state of Texas should establish a school voucher program giving parents the ability to apply their tax dollars toward the school of their choice?
 14. Do you believe public schools are blamed or targeted unfairly by public policy makers? Why?
 15. Are there any votes that you took during the 85th Legislative session in support of public schools (HB 21)? In support of charter schools (SB 1882)? School vouchers (HB 21-amendment)?
 16. In your opinion, what is the future of public schools and charter schools?
 17. Is there anything else you would like to add before we conclude the interview?
- Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Request

Subject: Dissertation Interview Request

Dear Participant,

I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin, and my dissertation focuses on the perceptions of policy makers toward public schools, charter schools, and school vouchers. I am focusing on three bills that were filed and voted on during the 85th Legislature: HB 21 (Rep. Huberty) relating to the funding of primary and secondary education, SB 1882 (Sen. Menendez and Rep. Koop) relating to traditional ISD's partnering with open-enrollment charter schools, and HB 21 Amendment (Rep. Simmons) instructing the committee to consider all methods of education choice and financing for special needs students.

I am conducting interviews with policymakers who have insight and voted on the three bills. I would be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you about your perspective and perceptions on public schools, charter schools, and school vouchers. Interviews will be approximately 30 minutes in length, scheduled at your convenience and will be audio-recorded for transcription. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. The written transcripts will be kept for 24 months upon the conclusion of this study for possible future research.

Your participation in this study is **confidential and anonymous**; I will make no reference to your name or district in the final dissertation. Please let me know if you have any questions and I thank you in advance for your participation and efforts as a public servant.

Yours in service,

Phil Cortez, MPA
Doctoral Candidate, PhD Program
The University of Texas at Austin

References

- ACLU v. Wisconsin, Complaint to U.S. Department of Justice* (2011). Retrieved from https://www.aclu.org/files/assets/complaint_to_doj_re_milwaukee_voucher_program_final.pdf
- Adams, J.E., & Hill, P.T. (2006). Educational accountability in a regulated market. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 81(1), 217-235.
- A. M. Aikin, Jr. [Editorial]. (1981). *Houston Post*, 2B.
- Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 74(8), 1-7.
- Barden, K., & Lassmann, M. (2016). Charter schools and public schools in Texas. *Education*, 136(3), 291-298.
- Barrow, L., & Rouse, C. (2006) U.S. elementary and secondary schools: equalizing opportunity or replicating the status quo? *Future of Children*, 16(2), 99-123.
- Bliss, C.S. (2006). School choice and the ongoing debate in Florida. *Independent School*, 65(3), 42-46.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (2d ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Bush v. Holmes*, 919 So. 2d 392. (2006).
- Cowen, J., & Fleming, D., & Gofen, A. (2008). Measuring the motivation to Charter: an

- examination of school sponsors in Texas. *Journal of School Choice*, 2(2), 128-154.
- Davis, M., & Robelen, E.W. (2004). Congress' shift to right may be felt in schools. *Education Week*, 24(11), 24-28.
- Eckes, S. E., & Mead, J., & Ulm, J. (2016). Dollars to Discriminate: The (Un)intended Consequences of School Vouchers. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 91(4), 537-558.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective Schools for the Urban Poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37(1), 15-18, 20-24.
- Fikac, P. (2017, April 16). Patrick vows to continue school voucher fight. *San Antonio Express News*, p. 1.
- Gammel, H.P.N. (1898). *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897*. Austin, (1), p. 451, 1297.
- General and Special Laws of Texas 1949, Senate Bill 115, Senate Bill 116, Senate Bill 117, 51st Texas Legislature, Regular Session. (1949).
- Glenn, C. L. (2006). The wrong debate. *Education Week*, 26(13), 31-32.
- Goldstein, L. (2003). Survey says parents using Florida 'McKay' vouchers are satisfied. *Education Week*, 22(41), 14.
- Gooden, M., & Huriya, J. & Torres, M. (2016) Race and School Vouchers: Legal, Historical, and Political Contexts. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 91:4, 522-536.
- Griffin et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).
- Gullatt, D. E., & Ritter, M. L. (2000). Measuring local public school's effectiveness. *Contemporary Education*, 71(4), 29.

- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). *Fourth-generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Harrison, M. (2005). Public problems, private solutions: school choice and its consequences. *CATO Journal*, 25(2), 197-215.
- Hayes, D. G., Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings*. New York, New York: The Guilford Press.
- House Bill 72-Public Education Reforms and Teacher Performance Pay. Texas Legislature, 68th Legislative Regular Session 1984. (1984).
- House Bill 21-Public Education Finance. Texas Legislature, 85th Legislative Special Session 2017. (2017).
- House Bill 21-Public School Finance, Motion to Instruct Conferees. Texas Legislature, 85th Legislative Special Session 2017. (2017).
- Howell, K. (2004). Texas School Laws and Public Education in East Texas: the beginnings of public schools in Henderson County, Texas, 1854-1868. *East Texas Historical Journal*, 42(2), 25-37.
- Knox, E. (1940). A historical sketch of secondary education for Negroes. *Journal of Negro education*, 9(3), p. 440-453.
- Leal, D. (2004). Latinos and School Vouchers: Testing the “Minority Support” Hypothesis. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(5) p. 1227-1237.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lofland, J. (1971). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. New York, NY: Wadsworth.

- Mann, D. (1990). Conditional school deregulation. *Education Digest*, 55(9), 17-19.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2d ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morowski, D. & Davis, O.L. (2005). *Through a Heavy Fog: Public High Schools in Texas for African Americans, 1900-1930. American Educational History Journal*, 32(2), p. 183-191.
- National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Details from the Dashboard: Charter School Race/Ethnicity Demographics. (2012). Retrieved from “http://publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/NAPCS-2010-2011-Race_Ethnicity-Details-from-the-dashboard_20120516T152831.pdf.”
- Penning, F., & Slate, J. (2011). Charter schools in Texas: An overview. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(3), 1-9.
- Preuss, G. (2009). The “Father” of Texas Education: A.M. Aikin and the Modernization of Texas Public Schools. *East Texas Historical Journal*, 48(2), 17-25.
- Public Agenda. (1999). *On Thin Ice: How advocates and opponents could misread the public’s views on vouchers and charter schools*. New York, New York.
- Republican Party of Texas. (2016). State Republican Party Platform. Retrieved from: <https://www.texasgop.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PERM-PLATFORM.pdf>
- Senate Bill 1-Public Education Code Revision. Texas Legislature, 74th Legislative Regular Session 1995. (1995).

- Senate Bill 1885-District Contract Partnerships. Texas Legislature, 85th Legislative Regular Session 2017. (2017).
- Shipp, D. (2008). Urban regime theory and the reform of public schools: Governance, power, and leadership. *Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*, 1(1), 89-108.
- Stone, C. (1989). *Regime politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Stone, C. (2015). Reflections on Regime Politics: From Governing Coalition to Urban Political Order. *Urban Affairs Review*, 51(1), 101-137.
- Sutton, L. C., & King, R. (2011). School Vouchers in a Climate of Political Change. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(2), 244-267.
- Sword, W. (1999). Accounting for presence of self: reflections on doing qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, (9), 270-278.
- Texas Democratic Party. (2016). Texas Democrats Platform.
Retrieved from: <https://www.txdemocrats.org/our-party/texas-democratic-party-platform/>
- Texas Education Agency. (2017). *An overview of the history of Public Education in Texas*. Retrieved from http://www.tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Charter_Schools
- Texas Education Agency. (2017). *Charter Schools*. Retrieved from http://www.tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Charter_Schools
- Texas Public School Funding, S. 115, S. 116, S. 117, 50th Legislative Session, (1949).
- UN General Assembly. (1948). *Universal declaration of human rights* (217 [III] A).
Paris.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *Private Schools: A brief portrait*. Washington, DC.

Vasquez Heilig, J., & Holme, J., & LeClair, A., & Redd, L., & Ward, D. (2016). Separate and Unequal: The problematic segregation of special populations in charter schools relative to traditional public schools. *Stanford Law & Policy Review*, 27(2), 251-293.

Voucher, choice advocates take hit in new reports. [Editorial]. (2007). *American School Board Journal*, 194(12), 8.

Washington Post, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard University. *National Survey on Latinos in America*. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999.

Wie, X., & Patel, D., & Young, V. (2014). Opening the “black box”: Organizational differences between charter schools and traditional public schools. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(3), 1-31.

Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, 536 U.S. 639 (2002).