The Association between School Choice and School Climate: Comparing School Climate in Private Religious, Charter, and Public Schools

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THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL CHOICE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE: 
COMPARING SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PRIVATE RELIGIOUS, 
CHARTER, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Mark Krommendyk

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Dr. Jianping Shen, Advisor

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2007

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THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL CHOICE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE: COMPARING SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PRIVATE RELIGIOUS, CHARTER, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mark Krommendyk, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 2007

The association between school climate and school choice was examined by conducting discriminant function analyses on data gathered from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey. This study asked the question, "Does school climate in private religious, charter, and public schools differ?" Teacher and principal responses to survey questions were grouped to measure six characteristics of school climate. The school climate characteristics measured were: (1) supportive principal leadership, (2) teacher collegiality, (3) teacher-principal relationships, (4) teacher satisfaction, (5) student behavior, and (6) teacher empowerment. The study found that the school climate in private religious schools could be statistically distinguished from the climate in both charter and public schools. The climate in private religious schools is more open and healthy than in charter and public schools. The study also found that the school climate in charter schools could be statistically distinguished from the climate in public schools. The climate in charter schools is more open and healthy than in public schools. The findings of the study support school choice as school improvement policy. At the same time, the findings caution that policymakers must make sure all parents have the ability to choose wisely. The study suggests
policymakers must be wary of the impact of choice on public schools. Finally, the study suggests future research into the variables that look at why the climate in private religious schools differs from the climate in charter schools.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The topic for this dissertation is a natural fit for me. My work in private religious schools, first as a teacher for 17 years and now as a building principal for 10 years, has placed me in the middle of the school choice debate from its beginnings. I have watched as public confidence in urban public schools has eroded. My own school has been impacted, as charter schools have drained off students from not only underperforming local public schools but local private religious schools as well. My school community actively supported a failed statewide referendum that would have made school vouchers constitutional. I have also been a principal in a private religious school district that has seen consistent enrollment decline for the last 10 years. This enrollment decline has resulted in my building being involved in three different school consolidation situations during my years as principal. This experience has left me keenly aware of the importance of school climate. It has also convinced me that climate can be purposefully developed and that this development requires strong principal leadership.

In great part, my work on this project is the result of the encouragement, patience, and support of Dr. Jianping Shen and I am deeply grateful to him. He has been my guide and mentor during my years as a graduate student at Western Michigan University (WMU) and he served as the chair of my dissertation committee. He has contributed a great deal to my intellectual growth as an educator in general and to my understanding of school choice and school climate in particular. I would not have
completed the project without his servant leadership. I am also grateful for the help, encouragement, and advice I received from my professors in the educational leadership department at WMU during my years here. Charles Warfield inspired me to grow and learn as an educator and served on my dissertation committee. Sue Poppink affirmed my ideas and shared relevant literature with me. Gary Miron, from the Evaluation Center at WMU, also served on my dissertation committee. He provided me with invaluable feedback and direction as I reviewed the literature and summarized the research. Kira Tena Jezaniah provided invaluable help with the advanced statistical analyses.

I am also grateful to the agency that provided the information on teachers, principals, and schools on which this study is based. I thank the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Education, for the use of their 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey. I am fortunate to be able to work with this data set. It has been a privilege to join so many great educators in delving into this data set.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Janet Krommendyk, for her steady encouragement, faithful support, and patience for all my work at WMU from start to finish.

Mark Krommendyk
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parental choice has been a cornerstone of federal education policy aimed at school improvement for at least 20 years. After years of public debate, the National Governors' Association first endorsed the goal of providing choice in public education in 1986. At the nation's first "Education Summit" in October 1989, President George H. W. Bush and the nation's 50 governors agreed to make choice a major part of the nation's education policy focus (U.S. Department of Education, 1989). By 1996, 43 of the nation's governors endorsed some type of choice in education (Hanks, 1997). Today, there are choice plans in 40 states and in many major American cities (Center for Education Reform, 2005; Cookson, 1994; Hanks, 1997; Lee, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The number of charter schools operating nation wide rose from 1,680 in 1999 to 3,625 in 2005. More than 1 million students enrolled in charter schools nationwide for the 2005-2006 school year (Center for Education Reform, 2005).

In any analysis of choice, it is important to realize that choice is everywhere in education in the United States. Choice is one of the more important strands in the fabric of school reform and policy as they stand today. Parents have always made choices regarding their children's education. Parents choose where to live to get into a school of their choice. They choose when to send their children to school. They work to get their children assigned to a particular teacher. They apply for magnet schools. Many parents
choose private schools for their children, sometimes at great financial sacrifice. School choice proposals in Milwaukee, Oregon, Ohio, Colorado, and California included both public and nonpublic schools. Advocates of choice assume that the act of choice is a parental right consistent with the rights we have as citizens. They believe that choice allows parents to influence the quality of education their child will receive (Lee & Bryk, 1989). The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) (U.S. Department of Education, 1992) states that choice creates opportunities for all stakeholders to create distinctive schools that are responsive to needs. These advocates believe that choice is a policy tool that will drive the education system to greater effectiveness by rewarding effective schools with more students. The debate over choice and chartering is an outgrowth of the belief that choice will allow schools to serve their clients in a more adaptive way (Chubb & Moe, 1990). There is also a public perception that private schools promote higher student achievement and greater fiscal responsibility (Choy, 1997; Kussrow & Kooi, 1995) and that choice will provide public schools opportunity to mimic successful private schools. Indeed, Horn and Miron (2000) report that charter schools are increasingly acting like private schools. They attribute this to the rise in the number of charters being run by education management organizations.

Opponents see choice as nothing more than an attempt by those members of society that are already privileged to increase the gap between those that have and those that do not have in our society. They believe that the very people most in need of better school options are those people least likely to take advantage of choice. Often, a lack of transportation, money, and information are the most important determinants in deciding
whether people take advantage of choice (Moore & Davenport, 1990). In addition, they point out there is little research to show that charters have led to innovation and increased accountability (Horn & Miron, 2000).

Clearly, using choice as a cornerstone of policy aimed at school improvement assumes that choice leads to more effective, improved schools. The assumption is that choice provides a climate that gives schools the ability to model and develop excellence without the usual restrictions from the school district, union, or state. Clearly, school reform is far too complex to be simply achieved by introducing choice. Both proponents and opponents make good points, and policymakers must weigh decisions on choice carefully. Decisions about the role choice will have in the future in American education must ultimately reflect research results. The key question that must be answered is, “Does choice lead to measured improvement?” Decision makers must agree on what they mean by improvement before they can begin measuring. Will improvement strictly be measured by student achievement, or can improvement in parent, teacher, or student satisfaction be enough to justify choice? What about improvement in financial efficiency or in the school’s ability to meet the needs of a specific population?

There are several factors that policymakers would do well to consider as they look to use choice to improve education (Elmore & Fuller, 1996). First, choice will distribute different groups of students in different ways. Further, choice will also impact achievement in specific groups in different ways. Second, the detrimental effects of choice on those who fail to choose must be considered side by side with the beneficial effects on those who take advantage of choice. Third, policymakers need to be careful
not to confuse increased stakeholder satisfaction among those who chose with overall school improvement for all students regardless of choice. In general, Elmore and Fuller warn that policy-makers must be just as concerned with what choice does to those left behind as with those that choose. Good choice policy will lead to school improvement for all students, not just a select few.

One recognized measure of school improvement is school climate (Raywid, 1983). School improvement is most likely to occur in schools whose climates can be characterized as open, healthy, and that have a strong collective efficacy (Hoy & Hoy, 2003). Climate generally refers to teacher, principal, student, and/or parent perceptions of the school environment. Climate is defined by the internal characteristics that distinguish schools from each other, and it influences teacher, student, parent, and administrator behavior. At its core, climate is an enduring quality of a school’s environment that, when experienced by teachers and principals, influences their behaviors. Climate is based on the collective actions of the school staff (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). School climate can be conceptualized and measured in terms of the openness and health of interpersonal relationships and the collective efficacy of the school staff (Hoy & Hoy, 2003). School climates that are open, healthy, and that have a strong collective efficacy are defined by certain characteristics depending on the researcher doing the defining. Openness is characterized by teacher interactions that are engaging, intimate, and collegial (Hoy & Clover, 1986; Hoy & Tarter, 1998). Openness is further characterized by principal behavior that is supportive, that encourages teachers to act independently, and that respects teachers personally and professionally. Schools with
healthy school climates can be described having the ability to adapt and to survive challenges over time (Miles, 1969). Collective efficacy is the shared perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on student learning (Hoy & Hoy, 2003).

School climate, then, is a way to capture the working atmosphere of the school. Climate refers to the basic patterns of behavior that are dominant in the school. Climate has been the subject of much research, and there are certainly many ways to look at climate. There are, however, some common characteristics that can and will be used in this study to measure school climate. These will include:

- The amount of supportive leadership provided by principals,
- The amount collegiality among teachers,
- The health of the relationships teachers and principals have with each other,
- The degree of satisfaction teachers have with their work,
- The frequency of student behavior problems, and
- The amount of power teachers have to influence decisions that impact their ability to teach.

Purpose of the Study

There is a body of work in the field of education that links school improvement and school quality to school climate. It is in this belief that school leaders are trained to create a positive school environment. It is because of this belief that school environment is examined in school accreditation processes. The purpose of this study is to examine
how the various climate characteristics compare in private religious schools, charter schools, and public schools. The goal is to look at whether choice is associated with climate. The inference will be that if choice is associated with climate and climate influences school improvement and quality, then policymakers can influence school improvement and quality by implementing choice policy. The findings and conclusions of this study will provide knowledge for looking at whether and how school choice is associated with school culture. This knowledge will be valuable for policymakers as they determine the extent and form choice policy will take in the future.

The general research question composed for this study is “Does school climate differ among private schools, charter schools, and public schools?” This same question will be asked for each climate characteristic being examined. (i.e., Is there a difference in teacher perceptions of collaboration among private schools, charter schools, and public schools?) The characteristics being examined are listed above. This study will use existing national data that were gathered by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and were extracted from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted in 1999-2000. This survey was developed as a tool to be used to examine school climate characteristics and will be used to explore the various climate components in the school community.

Importance of the Study

While choice continues to be an important part of the school reform movement in our nation, its merits continue to be debated by educators and politicians alike. Choice
proponents expected that forming charter schools would lead to the creation of new public schools that were innovative, accountable, more diverse, and efficient. In short, they expected reform and improvement (Horn & Miron, 2000). Some choice proponents also believed that allowing students to use public funds to attend private schools would give underprivileged students access to quality schools and provide competitive motivation to improve all schools. At the heart of the debate is the question, “Does school choice promote school improvement, and if so, for whom?” This study will contribute to our understanding of the answer to this question by contributing to our knowledge on school choice and school climate. This is a policy-oriented study. Public policymakers recognize the potential that choice forms such as charter schools and vouchers have to reduce public school enrollment (Choy, 1998; Fuller, 1996; Geske, 1997). They are also aware that critics claim that these forms of choice lead to an exodus of many of the brightest students, the most involved parents, and the best teachers (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996). Therefore, if choice is to continue to be a part of school reform policy, then it is imperative that choice does indeed lead to improvement. This study will use national data to provide both school educators and policymakers with knowledge of the impact choice has on school climate.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to aid the reader in understanding the research questions.
**Charter school:** A charter school is a public school organized by individuals or groups that operates under the jurisdiction (or charter) of an educational institution other than the local school district. Charter schools receive students by parental choice. Charter schools are funded by the state.

**Assigned school:** The local school district designates a neighborhood school as a family's school. Parents accept this assigned school as their children's school. Assigned schools are funded by the state.

**Religious private school:** Parents choose to send their children to a school that is affiliated with religion. These schools may be local or more regional. The parents through tuition and contributions fund private religious schools.

**Conceptual Framework for the Study**

Figure 1 provides detail of the conceptual framework for this study. The literature review supports the assumptions of this study. First, school choice is a key part of policymaker efforts to improve and reform schools, and second, school climate is a key and measurable indicator of a school's effectiveness and ability to improve.

**Limitations of the Study**

The only significant limitation of this study is the result of the fact that the study uses an existing database. As a result, the study has been developed with knowledge of the data. The study was conceptualized and the research questions formulated after the data were collected. The significance of this limitation is somewhat mitigated by the richness of the data. A large number of questions can be used to get at the main research
question of this study. In addition, there are a large representative number of responses for each category of school being compared.

![Diagram of School Choice and School Climate Relationships]

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Association Between School Choice and School Climate.
Outline of the Dissertation

The next chapter is a review of the literature. It will include (a) the theory of school choice from various perspectives; (b) models for school choice; (c) school choice as educational policy; (d) variables that influence parental choice; (e) school climate defined and conceptualized; (f) school climate and school culture—culture defined and conceptualized; (g) conclusions about climate, culture, and school improvement; (h) a summary of the literature examining school choice and school climate; (i) contributions of the study; and (j) research purpose and questions for the study.

Chapter III contains the proposed methodology for the study. It will include (a) secondary data, (b) sample, (c) research design, (d) research procedures, (e) hypotheses and data analysis, and (f) summary of methodology.

A description of the research findings is set forth in Chapter IV. Discussion and conclusion are found in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The school choice movement and the use of market forces as instruments of change have given both hope and concern to thoughtful people in the fields of education and policy. Horn and Miron (2000) summarized the hope:

Policymakers and charter school proponents initially expected that the charter initiative would lead to new public schools that would be innovative, highly accountable, and efficient. It was also believed that the charters would lead to increased diversity within the public school sector, that teachers and parents would be major stakeholders, and that reform would promote school-based management. (p. vii)

Brown (1992) articulated the concerns:

Choice will not result in market incentives to improve education. Choice will not improve educational opportunities for the poor. Choice will promote traditional schools, not innovative ones. Choice will not alter the influence of professional educators or increase the influence of parents in the schooling process. (p. 171)

The purpose of this study is to examine whether there is a significant difference in school climate among assigned schools, charter schools, and private religious schools. Given that choice remains highly controversial in the worlds of politics and education, the study will be valuable in making future policy. In the literature review that follows in this next chapter, the focus will be on school choice, school climate, and on how they are perceived together. The literature review will focus on research that:

- Conceptualizes the theory of choice from a number of perspectives,
• Identifies and examines the various common models of choice found in education today,
• Examines choice as educational policy by looking at the arguments for and against choice,
• Identifies and examines the variables that influence parental choice,
• Conceptualizes and describes school climate,
• Identifies and examines common school characteristics that can be used to measure school climate, and
• Summarizes how school choice and school climate are seen to influence each other.

Theory of School Choice and Mechanisms Promoted by Choice

Current thinking in the literature calls for a systematic approach that allows researchers to conceptualize theory such as school choice from a number of perspectives (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Bush, 1995; Carlson, 1996; Hsieh & Shen, 1998, 2000; Shen, 1998). This systematic approach can then help one understand the theories and perspectives different advocates use to justify school choice policies (Hsieh, 2000). School choice can be viewed from the following perspectives: (a) philosophical perspectives, (b) economic perspectives, (c) public choice perspectives, (d) decentralization perspectives, and (e) educational perspectives (Carlson, 1996; Hsieh, 2000; Hsieh & Shen, 1998, 2000). Each of these perspectives provides unique insight into why advocates believe in school choice and why opponents are wary of it.
The processes or mechanisms promoted by school choice and their expected influence on school climate can be viewed from these same perspectives. Each perspective provides unique insight into how advocates believe that school choice will positively influence school climate and why opponents believe it will not. Mechanisms promoted by school that advocates expect to positively influence school climate include: innovation, accountability, efficacy, parental involvement, competition, school-based management, flexibility, and decentralization. The mechanism(s) promoted by any individual advocate or advocate group depends on the perspective(s) from they view choice.

Philosophical Perspectives

Viewed from a philosophical perspective, choice is valid policy for schools because of the roles schools have in our society. According to Carlson (1996), “Making choices is part of living in a democratic society” (p. 217). School is the place that intellect is developed and spirit emerges. Morals and values are shaped by the school experience. Mandatory education is national policy because schools are mandated to teach what it means to be a citizen. The central places of schools in the community mean that certain values will be emphasized over others. Kane (1992) argues that school is the place where assumptions and commitments are passed on to the next generation. In this context, parents have a right to create schools and choose schools that pass on the assumptions and commitments they want passed on. Viewed from the philosophical
perspective, belief in choice is tied to a fundamental belief in the right of the individual and the right of parents to train their children (Kamin & Erickson, 1981).

Clearly, this philosophic justification for school choice must be balanced by the duty of our democratic society to ensure the intellectual development of all citizens. If choice, while giving some citizens the opportunity to emphasize certain values, hinders the opportunity of others to receive an excellent education, it is not philosophically sound policy. Private religious schools already provide choice opportunities for some parents, but many advocates call for full public support of choice so that economics do not keep parents from making the choice they want to make (Choy, 1997; Freidman, 1962). This call for vouchers has been interpreted by some as contradictory to the constitutional charge to keep church and state separate. This is currently a matter for the courts and the outcome of this debate will certainly shape choice policy for the foreseeable future. The soundness of school choice as policy is determined, in the end, by the ability of the state to allow parents the right to choose while at the same time ensuring the development of all children as both citizens and individuals.

From the philosophic perspective, the mechanism promoted by school choice that choice advocates expect will lead to school improvement is greater school accountability. Charter schools are freed from many rules and regulations that apply to traditional public schools. This autonomy is expected to lead to school improvement in the form of high student academic achievement and an open, healthy school climate (Bulkley & Wohlstetter, 2004; Miron & Nelson, 2000, 2002). Charter schools are founded on the philosophy that the trade off for greater autonomy is greater
accountability. Charter schools can develop programs that are responsive and specific to parent and community assumptions and commitments. Ingersoll (2003) points out that advocates of choice often believe that schools are too centralized, allowing little freedom to make decisions that will lead to improvements. Ingersoll concludes that these choice advocates really do not understand how schools work and that choice will not really lead to the kind of autonomy that will improve schools, but he affirms that some choice advocates believe that greater school accountability will yield positive results. School choice is founded on the belief that parents should be free to choose the school that best meets their needs (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). Parents can hold charter schools more accountable than they can hold public schools because when the charter school does not meet their needs by providing the climate they expect and the achievement they expect, they can choose not to attend.

_Economic Perspectives_

Advocates often use economic terms to justify school choice policy. Terms such as *market driven, competitive, efficient, consumer, product* and *supply and demand* are part of the rhetoric used to explain the merits of choice from an economic perspective. Viewed from an economic perspective, school choice is good policy because it is an extension of the capitalist economic underpinnings of our society. In this view, the goal is to create a system that is as responsive to the needs of parents and taxpayers as possible. The resulting open competition for public funding, students, and teachers will result in efficient, quality schools thriving, while inefficient, poor schools fail (Chubb &

Proponents that justify school choice from an economic perspective assume that all consumers have the ability to choose. This assumption is at the center of the debate whether an economic perspective really does support school choice policy. The literature is ripe with researchers that have taken shots at this central assumption. Wells and Crain (1992) point out that in order to use economic theory to justify school choice, the assumption must be made that families will act rationally and in a goal-oriented fashion in selecting the best school for their children. This rationality is in truth bounded by a lack of resources like transportation and by their own perceptions of where they best fit in. Wells and Crain (1992) suggest that poor and minority families are less likely to choose schools where wealthy, Caucasian students are the majority. Poor and minority urban families were found to be more likely to choose a familiar neighborhood school even when they believed a suburban school was better (Wells, 1991). Those using an economic perspective to support school choice must then come to terms with the truth that all parents will not act rationally. Some will not make the best choice and some students will be left behind. The question becomes, will those that choose still work to improve school for those left behind? Put another way, will choice lead to improvement across the board, or will it just lead to improvement for those that choose?
From the economic perspective, one mechanism promoted by school choice that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is competition. Levin and Belfield (2005) point out that choice advocates believe that school choice injects a healthy dose of competition into the school scene. Advocates that believe that competition will lead to school improvement often promote vouchers as the economic engine that will drive competition. They have no problem with entrepreneurs making a profit in the school business. They believe that competition for students among private religious, charter, and public schools will provide healthy incentives for all schools to improve. Competition forces schools to be more efficient. The minimization of regulations that is part of choice is good policy because regulations inhibit competition.

Another mechanism promoted by school choice from the economic perspective that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is school-based management. Choice advocates believe that choice is a market-driven reform that gives schools greater opportunity for school-based management. From an economic perspective, schools that take advantage of this opportunity are more flexible and therefore more able to meet the demands of their customers. They also are free to pursue other reforms that have been shown to improve student achievement and school climate (Ladd, 2002).

Public Choice Perspectives

Public choice perspectives can also be used to justify school choice policy. Viewed from this perspective, communities have a right to maximize their self-interest
and choice is one of the tools they can use (Weeres, 1988). School choice is linked to school improvement, and improved and more efficient schools provide benefit to the community. Therefore, school choice is good public policy. The truth, Weeres points out, is that communities have been competing for new resources using school policy for many years, and school choice is another tool in their box. Opponents of choice quickly point out that where there are winners there are losers, and that in a system that uses schools to compete for business, and therefore tax dollars, it is inevitable that the rich will get richer and the poor poorer. This, they contend, is not good public policy, nor is it policy that honors our democratic value of equality.

The public choice perspective emphasizes the right of the whole community or at least large sections of the community to promote their group self-interest. The mechanism promoted by school choice from this perspective that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is parental involvement. Choice advocates argue that school choice will facilitate parental involvement. Greater parental involvement, in turn, increases the ability of schools to operate efficiently and to obtain funds from the community (Hsieh, 2000; Weeres, 1988). Increased parent involvement also increases the school’s capacity to serve the community. The autonomy of choice allows schools to create community-specific programs that lead to improved school climate. For example, an independent charter school or religious private school in a predominately non-English speaking neighborhood has the freedom to offer classes and hold parent meetings that help parents understand school literacy and math programs.
Such programs are more likely to impact the community if parents are involved with the school and an improved school climate is likely to result (Wohlstetter & Chau, 2004).

Decentralization Perspectives

Some proponents of school choice theory use decentralization theory to support the school choice movement. The basic argument is that decentralization always allows those directly responsible for success to be the most influential on success. School choice then is simply a way to decentralize schools and put responsibility for school improvement in the hands of teachers and building administrators (Carlson, 1996). In 1991, the Center for Policy Research in Education (CPRE, 1990) reported that 25 states were using decentralization policies linked to school choice to initiate school improvement on the local school level. These efforts included four treatments.

1. School climate and improved achievement (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Collective efficacy is defined as the perception of the staff in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can execute courses of actions required for school improvement.

2. Rewards and sanctions based on performance.

3. Technical assistance for underachieving schools

4. Encouragement of innovation and flexibility via regulation waivers.

Carlson (1996) reminds those that justify school choice from a decentralization perspective that decentralization efforts often just lead to new and more sophisticated
forms of state control. Parents' influence on schools may not grow because of these
efforts; indeed, it may be limited by the very policies meant to free.

One mechanism promoted by school choice from the decentralization perspective
that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is collective efficacy. Choice advocates believe that decentralizing decision making strengthens the collective efficacy of the staff and this leads to a positively effect on student achievement. Principals influence collective efficacy by leading in ways that promote mastery experiences for teachers. They do this by making sure teachers have adequate resources, providing time to develop skills, and communicating their vision and the mission of the school clearly. Where there is high collective efficacy, the climate is characterized by teacher acceptance of challenging goals, strong teacher effort, and teacher persistence in overcoming difficulties (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2006).

Another mechanism promoted by school choice from the decentralization perspective that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is teacher autonomy. Viewed from this perspective, choice advocates believe that increased teacher autonomy gives teachers the flexibility to make curriculum and technique decisions based on what they see is needed (Miron & Nelson, 2000). Lubienski (2004) points out that choice advocates expect decentralization and teacher autonomy to encourage innovations in governance and classroom instruction. He concludes that the reality is more complex. Too often schools of choice use their autonomy to pursue familiar forms of schooling. The problem is that while choice schools may be free from bureaucratic mandates, they are still subject to market-driven imperatives.
It is important to note that collective efficacy and teacher autonomy can be competing forces and they can be complimentary forces for school improvement. Clearly each can contribute to improving the school climate, but if teacher autonomy has no direction and does not contribute to the collective efficacy of the school staff, then decentralization will not lead to improved school climate (Goodard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004).

*Educational Perspectives*

Those that work to synthesize all the arguments for school choice into a cohesive argument are justifying choice policy from an educational perspective. Choice is the result of sound thinking about education. Stanford University professor Henry Levin (1990) articulates this perspective. Levin uses a theoretical framework to analyze the place of choice in education. This framework considers both the private (personal) and social (community) purposes of education. Education serves the community by providing a common experience. It serves parents by providing intellectual growth for children. The heart of Levin’s framework rests on balancing the need of society to teach common social and democratic ideals with the need of parents to determine what their children should be taught. Education is the place in our society where these needs intersect. Parents do have the right to choose the experiences, influences, and values their children experience, and our democratic society does need to use the educational system to promote its most essential political, economic, and social institutions. Choice policy, according to Levin (1990), must be examined in the light of how well it maintains this balance. School choice is a preferred way to enable parents to meet their private needs. It
has a place in educational policy. It must, however, be tempered with the states' mandate to reproduce social benefits. In examining the role of school choice in education, Levin concludes that choice appears to be a more efficient way to meet parents' needs. There is evidence that choice leads to superior student achievement. He also warns, however, that the costs of sustaining necessary social benefits in a choice approach are prohibitive. Choice makes it difficult for the state to gather information and regulate so that social and democratic ideals are taught to all students.

One example of a mechanism promoted by school choice from the educational perspective that choice advocates expect will lead to improved school climate is greater professional opportunities for teachers. Miron and Nelson (2002) contextualized professional opportunity for teachers as the opportunity to influence the learning program at the school site. They discussed three core components of professional opportunity: classroom autonomy, influence in school-wide decisions, and professional culture. Classroom autonomy has been discussed above as a mechanism promoted by decentralization. Teachers have influence in school decisions when they are allowed and expected to help set school climate, culture, and organization. They will participate in decisions such as student tracking, the allocation of resources, and setting the school mission (Ingersoll, 2003). The final component of professional opportunity choice advocates expect school choice to enhance is professional culture for teachers. Professional culture refers to the way teachers nurture each other professionally. When teachers discuss methods, beliefs, norms, and values, they are establishing a professional
culture. A healthy professional culture among teachers is characterized by a collective focus on student learning and teacher collaboration (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996).

Miron and Nelson (2002) conclude that school choice is indeed promoting professional opportunities for teachers in charter schools. They point out that their research shows that charter school teachers have a high degree of agreement on the school’s mission and have a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Teachers in charter schools chose charter schools in order to find communities marked by professional opportunity.

Conclusions

Advocates believe that school choice promotes mechanisms that will positively influence school climate. The mechanisms most commonly examined in the literature include innovation, accountability, efficacy, parental involvement, competition, school-based management, flexibility, and decentralization. The influence of each mechanism is best understood when it is examined from a particular perspective. The mechanism promoted by individual choice advocates depends on the perspective from which they view choice. The literature review shows that when viewed from a particular perspective, each mechanism mentioned above does indeed positively influence school climate in the school of choice. However, the literature also shows that the positive influence of each mechanism must be balanced with unintended influences brought about by the mechanism. For example, some advocates justify choice from a philosophic perspective. They believe choice is a right in our democratic society. These advocates
believe that choice promotes school autonomy and school autonomy leads to an improved school climate and school improvement in general. Researchers have shown this to be true. Researchers have also shown, however, that the positive influence of autonomy must be balanced with the loss of control the government has over schools of choice. This loss of control can have unintended consequences.

The literature also shows that advocates base their beliefs on assumptions. For example, advocates that justify choice from an economic perspective believe that the mechanism choice promotes is competition. They point out that competition drives schools to improve and that schools populated by parents that choose do have improved school climates. Researchers have shown this to be true. The use of choice to promote competition, however, assumes that all parents have the ability to choose and will in fact make a choice that is in the best interests of their children. Researchers have shown that there are circumstances where this assumption is false. Parents do not always have the ability to choose, nor do they always make the best choice.

It must be concluded from the literature then that research does support the belief that school choice does promote mechanisms that do positively influence school climate and therefore lead to school improvement. These findings must, however, be balanced by the understanding that each mechanism will have unintended consequences as well. In addition, it is important for policymakers to examine and understand all underlying assumptions when they are promoting choice as school improvement policy.
Models for School Choice

School choice plans come in many forms. Thomas (1997) defines a school choice plan as an educational option that is supported by government funding and that is accessible to all students. The scope and diversity of these plans is bound to expand in the coming years as choice continues to be more accepted and accessible. For the purposes of this paper, several models of school choice will be considered for analysis. These include (a) charter schools, (b) magnet schools, (c) interdistrict open enrollment, (d) intradistrict open enrollment, and (e) voucher programs and private schools.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are schools typically organized by individuals or corporations, often as an enterprise focused on returning a profit. Generally, charter schools are autonomous schools that offer parents a particular educational focus. Approval to operate a charter school must be granted by a state-identified sponsoring agent. These agents are typically higher education institutions. The charter is a contract that specifies student outcomes. Charter schools typically have three years to demonstrate that these student outcomes have been met. The thinking behind charter schools is that they increase school autonomy. In theory, autonomy encourages administrators and teachers to create schools where their ideas of best practice can flourish (Carlson, 1996). Instead of being bound by government regulations, the charter school is accountable for achieving its stated objectives (Biller, 1995). In practice, many charter schools have yet to show much in the way of improved student achievement (Horn & Miron, 2000).
Magnet Schools

Magnet schools are schools developed by school districts to offer specialized curriculum and/or teaching methods to parents in that school district. Students from the whole district may apply to go to the magnet school. In general, students are selected for the magnet school by lottery or using some specific selection criteria such as test scores or GPA. School districts often use magnet schools to give students with special interests an opportunity to focus on those interests. This means a student may have to show evidence of special aptitude to attend some magnet schools (Thomas, 1997).

Interdistrict Open Enrollment

Interdistrict open enrollment is a plan where students may choose to attend school in a district they do not reside in, generally a neighboring district. Funding follows the student to the new district. This form of choice is becoming more and more prevalent. Interdistrict open enrollment is only possible where school districts cooperate. Often space is a major limiting factor in this model. Another limiting factor is that parents tend to choose location over higher achievement (Carnegie, 1992). Transportation and comfort with the familiar are the main reasons cited for this. Because state funding follows the students, interdistrict enrollment continues to grow. Often school districts use it as a tool to increase enrollment at the expense of their neighbors.
**Intradistrict Open Enrollment**

Intradistrict open enrollment allows parents to choose to enroll their children in any appropriate school within a particular school district. This form of choice is not prevalent in the United States. Intradistrict open enrollment encourages schools to compete with each other for students and essentially eliminates location, traditionally the most powerful factor in parental choice, as a deciding factor for where parents send their children. Intradistrict choice does require all parents in the district to become active decision makers regarding school choice.

**Voucher Programs and Private Schools**

In voucher plans, parents may decide where their child goes to school and the money spent by the government to educate the child follows the child. Typically, the purpose of voucher plans is to allow parents to choose private education or an alternate public school for their children at the expense of the government. The hope of such programs is that vouchers will give parents in disadvantaged school districts the ability to attend public or private schools that are better able to meet their needs or to choose schools that better demonstrate the core values they want for their child. Supporters of voucher plans point out that such plans will enable families from poor economic backgrounds to choose schools they would like to attend but could not afford. Opponents of voucher plans believe that vouchers allow parents to avoid racial and economic diversity. Private schools can, in general, be placed into two categories, religious and nonreligious. Data from the U.S. Department of Education (1991) provide
an interesting snapshot of private schools. Private schools tend to be small with half enrolling fewer than 150 students. Private schools do not tend to be racially diverse. Approximately half of all private schools enroll less than 5% minority students.

School Choice as Educational Policy

The theories and models of choice presented above serve to clarify the arguments for and against using choice as public educational policy. Certainly, those persons most threatened by choice (like teacher union members) will be quick to point out the cons of choice, while those persons most likely to benefit from choice (like private school families) trumpet the pros of choice. Education has always had a dual purpose in American society (Hadderman, 2003). It has always served two masters. One master is the family and the local community. The other master is the nation and society as a whole. Hadderman (2003) points out that school choice is directly the result of policymakers working to meet individual/family interests in order to find the right balance between individual/family freedom and the interests of the community.

As a servant of the family and the local community, education is the means by which individuals pass on the knowledge and values they want passed on to the next generation. This purpose is served when families have the right to choose the school their children will attend and when local communities have the right to run their school the way they see fit with maximum influence over curriculum, methods, policies, management practices, etc. It is the focus on this purpose that gives schools their local feel and sense of community.
As a servant of the nation and society as a whole, education is the means by which the common social and democratic ideals on which the nation is founded are passed on from generation to generation. School is the place where all children learn the knowledge and values they need to be effective citizens. School is the pot where diverse people are melted together to become unified citizens of one nation. This purpose is served when the state (and/or the federal government) mandates curriculum, policies, methods, management practices, etc.

Educational policy issues can be analyzed through the lenses of these two purposes. What one believes is the main purpose of education will greatly influence one’s position on a proposed policy. For example, people who believe the purpose of school is mainly to pass on the common social and democratic ideals on which the nation is founded to the next generation will have a completely different view of desegregation than people who believe school must first protect the individual rights of parents to determine what their children will be taught and experience. The reality is that, to a great extent, most Americans believe that schools actually must serve both purposes. The following review of the pros and cons of choice will be linked to these two fundamental, at times complementary and at times opposing, purposes of education in America.

*Arguments for School Choice*

Many arguments for school choice are embedded in the theories and models detailed above. Wang and Walberg (2001) and Lieberman (1990) summarize the arguments for choice while addressing the issue from the point of view of who should
rule the schools—parents or educators. The arguments for choice that they cite include: (a) choice is a fundamental democratic right that is consistent with core American values (Carnegie, 1992); (b) choice brings market forces into education; (c) choice promotes equality by providing disadvantaged families with an opportunity for better schools than are located in their own neighborhoods; (d) choice leads to greater accountability for school leaders; (e) choice leads to higher levels of staff professionalism; (f) parents and students who take advantage of choice are more committed to school improvement and success (Carnegie, 1992; Paulu, 1989; Young & Clinchy, 1992).

Paulu (1989) adds that choice allows the kinds of structural changes to schools that make it more likely that individual student needs will be addressed, overall student achievement will improve, parent satisfaction will increase, and opportunities for disadvantaged parents to be involved with their children's education will increase. Other researchers (Cookson, 1994; Hill, 1996; Nathan & Ysseldyke, 1994) say that the process of choosing is important even if it does not lead directly to outcomes such as growth in student achievement because it leads to a sense of empowerment among parent groups that have historically felt disenfranchised.

Some arguments for choice are specific to a particular model of choice. Charters make it possible for parents to join with teachers and administrators to create schools that are free from the regulations and rules that can quash innovation (Tirozzi, 1996). Charter schools are likely to benefit from hundreds of hours of volunteer labor contributed by parents, other family members, school staff, and even students themselves (Finn, 1996). Charter schools, then, serve as forces that bring the community together,
and this alone may make them a valuable addition to the educational landscape. Because parents, administrators, and teachers are writing the charter for their own school, charter schools represent great potential for the empowerment of all school community members.

Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that open enrollment choice plans have the potential to counter the excessive bureaucracy that tends to bog down creative school reform. Free market choice opens the door to creative solutions to school problems that in turn opens the door to school improvement. They hypothesize that the interaction of competition, school decentralization, and free choice will result in fewer poor performing schools and more successful, achieving schools.

Arguments that promote vouchers as the primary means to parent choice focus on the belief that democracy mandates that parents should have the right to choose the school their children attend (Beirlein, 1993). Vouchers offer choice to underprivileged families that want their children to be educated in religious schools. Proponents of vouchers argue that they are the most effective way to increase school accountability. These proponents believe that vouchers give public dollars directly to parents, boosting their purchasing power and making schools and teachers directly accountable to parents, not to school boards or state and federal education agencies (Fuller, Burr, Huerta, Puryear, & Wexler, 1999). Vouchers would especially benefit low-income families. These families would have the power to improve their lives by choosing better schools for their children (Friedman, 1997).
Arguments Against School Choice

Many researchers summarize the arguments against choice. Hadderman (2002), Cuban (Cuban & Shipps, 2000), Fuller et al. (1999), and Ravitch (2001) each voice the same basic summative argument against choice. Choice will hurt public schools and the students left behind in them and therefore is not just public policy. Margaret Hadderman (2002) summarizes the basic argument of opponents of school choice when she writes: "On one side are voices claiming that strong public schools are so essential for the common good that any kind of school choice that might weaken public schools should be discouraged" (p. 83).

Larry Cuban (2000) speaks for choice opponents when he insists that a consumer driven, market-based approach to education is in conflict with the main purpose of public schools, which is to develop citizens that care for the community and can contribute to it. Diane Ravitch (2001) worries that choice will undermine our society’s shared culture and erode the public schools’ traditional ability to help immigrants assimilate into American life. She agrees with earlier opponents that concluded that choice will help only to unravel our loose social structures and undermine our pluralistic and diverse country (Bastian, 1989; Bhagavan, 1996; Nathan, 1989). Bruce Fuller and associates (1999) at Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) point out that policy that uses choice as a way to reform schools will lead to decentralization and less government involvement. They question whether choice policy will advance the ability of public schools to offer all children a common core of knowledge, widen opportunities for all children, reduce inequality, or enrich democratic participation locally.
With the basic argument against choice firmly in their minds, many choice opponents have gone on to voice more specific concerns. One concern opponents have is whether there are or can ever be enough good school choices in some local districts so that all children in these districts truly have choice available to them (Bastian, 1989). Shanker (1992) counters the argument for choice that choice is a given right in a democratic society. He argues that education is not a market good purchased by consuming parents; rather education is a public good and as such is part of the community’s responsibility of preparing future citizens. Opponents have also asked if a focus on the open-market system will force some schools to focus on marketing strategies instead of on real educational issues and reforms. Schools that focus on marketing strategies could place an inordinate amount of weight on assessment results and may be tempted to deny enrollment to students that bring down assessment results (Nathan, 1989). Another specific concern opponents of choice wonder about is whether parents could or would make choices that are truly in their children’s best educational interest. Researchers have found that lower income urban families are indeed the least likely to participate in choice (Hadderman, 2002; McDermott, Bowles, & Churchill, 2003). Brown (1992) studied early choice programs in Holland, Australia, and Canada and concluded that parents, students, and teachers prefer traditional schools to innovative ones. He worries that choice will produce two distinct types of schools, rich schools and poor schools. Carlson (1996) summarizes another specific concern when he concludes that choice is really a misguided reform effort because it distracts policymakers and the public from more serious and productive forms of school reform.
Choice gives the impression of being a “quick fix” and leads policymakers away from reform efforts that require hard work, deep thought, and additional resources.

Some arguments against choice are more specific to a particular model of choice. Charter schools have not proven to automatically improve schools or ensure quality education. In his early critique of the charter school movement, Alex Molnar (1996) states the obstacles the charter movement needs to overcome to consistently foster educational reforms that will lead to increased achievement for all children. Molnar warns that in spite of the rosy rhetoric of charter proponents, profiteers are really driving the charter movement. To help children in the nation’s poorest schools, charter schools can flourish only where teachers are paid less or spending is increased. Molnar points out that these obstacles are not unique to charter schools and he concludes that the charter movement itself does not provide a unique solution to the problems faced by American schools. Another argument against charters is the tendency that higher income families are more likely to choose a charter school for their children. This undermines the ability of the charter movement to produce public and social benefits for all children.

Accordingly, charters then undermine the democratic structures of American society (Gesky, 1997; Wagner, 1996). The final argument against charter schools is that they just do not work. Fuller et al. (1999) points out that research-based evaluations of whether charter schools boost student performance are few in number and often flawed. Miron (2000) does not find evidence that charters enhance student performance in the state of Michigan.
Noted education philosopher Ted Sizer (2004) was an enthusiastic supporter of the charter school movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He served as co-principal of one with his wife, Nancy, in the mid-1990s. Today, however, Sizer warns that the promise of reform has been stifled by government regulation and mandates. Sizer believes that charters can produce meaningful change only if they are used to promote variety among different types of schools and if they give true power of choice to the stakeholders of the schools. These are two criteria that are not being met because of current national education policy. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates standards and tests, and rewards and punishes schools based on results. To Sizer then, we have a national education contradiction today. Government policy promotes charter schools, while at the same time government policy inhibits their ability to institute successful reforms.

Some arguments against choice also focus on the use of voucher programs to reform and improve schools. Some critics point out that voucher programs increase administrative costs and therefore use up precious funds that should go directly to schools (Levin, 1998). They add that vouchers redistribute students inappropriately along racial and religious lines (Hadderman, 2002). John Witte (1999) cites four fairly negative results from the Milwaukee voucher program in his criticism of vouchers in general. These results include the loss of active parents from the public schools, student attrition from private schools, lower achievement test scores, and the use of dubious findings by voucher supporters to push for program expansion. Witte's criticisms are echoed by Alex Molnar (2000). Molnar studied the Cleveland and the Milwaukee
voucher programs and found in both cases that student achievement increases were just not there.

Parental demand for open enrollment slots is strong in many urban school districts (Fuller et al., 1999). NCLB policy mandates that children in failing schools have the opportunity to transfer to better performing schools. This policy has made open enrollment a part of the nation’s education reform landscape. Early researchers worried that open enrollment plans would sort students by race, income, and religion. Fuller et al. (1999) give some credence to these worries with the PACE finding that California parents using open enrollment programs to transfer their children out of underachieving schools are more likely to be better educated, white, and more affluent than those leaving their children in neighborhood schools. Fuller et al. add that PACE researchers have found no evidence that this choice option lowers dropout rates or raises student achievement. After studying open enrollment plans in Fort Collins, Colorado, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, Bomotti (1996) echoed Fuller et al. when he concluded that parents were more likely to change schools if they were already actively involved in their children’s education.

Variables That Influence Choice

The fact that so many people are passionate about the pros and cons when it comes to using choice as major educational policy aimed at bringing about large-scale improvements in the American education system is not the only reason choice is controversial. Any study of choice will also show that there are many variables that
influence parental choice. Researchers have found it difficult to tease out the influence of a given variable independent of the influence of other variables. As a result, researchers have often disagreed on which parents are likely to take advantage of choice. It is important to understand the variables that influence parent choice in order to answer the question of whether the families for whom choice is intended are indeed likely to exercise choice. Miron and Nelson (2002) pointed out that choice is founded on the belief that families will choose schools with a mission and educational philosophy they agree with. Choice critics charge that choice actually reinforces segregation on the basis of income, race, ethnicity, and other family background characteristics. Miron and Nelson examined the social characteristics of students and families that choose to attend charter schools. These social variables included family income, race, family structure, parent education levels, students' education aspirations, amount of time parents spent volunteering in school, attitude about previous school attended, and educational needs. Hsieh (2000) reviewed empirical studies of school choice. These studies examined the variables that seem to influence parental choice. Her review led her to assert:

A review of empirical studies of school choice as related to family characteristics, school characteristics, parental expectations, student achievement, parental satisfaction with the school, and parental involvement in education shows these are complicated variables that sometimes overlap in determining parents' position on school choice. (p. 23)

Hsieh's review of the research did, however, reveal some basic influences on choice. Her findings include:

- Social class is a factor in parental choice.
- School characteristics affect choice.
The most influential school characteristic influencing choice is religious affiliation.

- Race is a factor in school choice.
- Parents that choose have higher academic expectations.
- Parents that choose are more involved with their child’s school.
- Parents that choose are more satisfied with their child’s school.

The variables that Miron and Nelson (2002) and Hsieh (2000) reviewed fall into two general categories. The first set of variables relate to family characteristics. These variables include family income, parent education levels, race, and student gender. The second set of variables fall into the category of perceived school characteristics. These variables include school/home location, school race composition, school quality, parent involvement, student academic achievement, and parent satisfaction with the school.

Family Characteristics

Many of the researchers asking why or parents might or might not participate in school choice have looked at variables relating to family characteristics. Hsieh provided an overview of a number of studies. She looked at studies examining family income as a factor in whether a family chooses a school other than its local public school. She found that studies showed that low-income urban families were more likely to take advantage of choice than high-income suburban families. Hsieh hypothesized that suburban families were more satisfied with their schools. Allensworth and Rosenkrans’ (2000) study of enrollment patterns and access to magnet schools in Chicago concluded that students in
the wealthiest sections of the city have more access to Chicago’s highest performing magnet schools. Low-income families living predominantly on the south side generally had to travel further to attend the highest achieving elementary schools and were underrepresented in these schools. In their study of desegregation results in Cincinnati and St. Louis schools of choice, Smrekar and Goldring (1999) concluded that differences in family income should spur efforts to expand low-income parents’ participation in school choice, but they stopped short of saying that low family income was a deterrent factor in parent participation. The Children’s Scholarship Fund (CSF) was set up to enable low-income families to attend private schools of their choice starting in the 2000-2001 school year. The directors of the fund received 1.25 million applications and awarded 40,000 scholarships. Recipients were chosen by lottery. In their evaluation of the first-year results of the CSF, Harvard professors Paul Peterson and David Campbell (2001) carefully examined the reasons families made the choices they did. They did this by comparing the families that used the scholarships they were offered with the families that were offered scholarships but declined to use them. When comparing these two groups, one that took advantage of choice and one that did not, they found the household income of taker families to be higher than decliners.

The findings for parent education level were mixed. Citing studies of choice programs in Massachusetts, Milwaukee, and San Antonio (Cookson, 1994; Fossey, 1994; Martinez, Kemerer, & Godwin, 1996; Witte, 1996), Hsieh concluded that in general better educated parents are more likely to exercise choice both in public school choice plans and beyond in private schools. She did note, however, that this finding
needed to be seen in the light of specific studies of poor inner-city parents. Lee, Croninger, and Smith (1996) studied choice patterns in Detroit and found that less educated, minority parents do strongly support choice, especially if they live in an underperforming school district. They noted, however, that nearly one third of parents surveyed had no opinion about choice, and these parents had considerably less income than those exercising choice. Wells (1996) studied low-income minority families in St. Louis and found school location to be more important than parent education levels when analyzing why parents participate in choice. Hsieh concluded that parental education levels must be combined with home location when looking at which parents will use choice effectively.

Researchers also looked at race as a factor in school choice. Hsieh found that African-American and Hispanic families were significantly more likely to favor choice programs as long as the program allowed them to escape what they perceived to be an undesirable school setting. Studies by Allensworth and Rosenkrans (2000) and Yon, Nesbit, and Algozzine (1998) found minority students to be less likely to be included in schools of choice. These researchers concluded that minority parents had the desire to participate in choice but did not participate as often as white middle-class parents due to commuting problems.

The last family characteristic Hsieh reviewed was student gender. She found that parents of girls were more likely to take advantage of choice. West (1995) and David (1997) found that parents of girls were likely to opt for smaller single.gender girls schools. Witte (1996) found that there were more girls enrolled in the Milwaukee choice
program. Further, he found the girls were more likely to qualify for choice programs when there was an admissions requirement to the program.

The review of the studies in family characteristics of school choice reveals a few observations of note in the debate over which families benefit from school choice. In summary, these studies show that lower-income urban families in poor performing school districts are likely to take advantage of choice to give their child a better education. Parent education level, income, race, and gender are all predictors of choice participation but are strongly interrelated with home location and race. White suburban families with higher income and higher levels of parent education are more likely to be satisfied with their assigned public school. If they are not satisfied, they are likely to send their children to private schools (Strate, 1993). The greatest source of dissatisfaction for these families is their wish to have a religious component included in their child's education. These families do not often favor school choice policy in general but do favor voucher plans (Witte, 1996). Minority urban families with lower income levels and higher parent education levels are likely to take advantage of school choice. These families have limited resources and are unable to choose their children's school by choosing where they live or by sending them to private schools. These families are likely to take advantage of school choice policy when school choice is made available. In summarizing the results of their evaluation of the CSF program, Peterson and Campbell (2001) stated that families offered the scholarships were more likely to report that academic quality and religious considerations were the most important reasons for choosing the school.
Perceived School Characteristics

Parent perceptions about the characteristics of both their assigned school and possible schools of choice are also important variables researchers have looked at as they have analyzed why parents participate in school choice. The location of a family’s home in relation to its assigned school and to possible schools of choice is an important indicator of parent support for school choice. Many families choose their home location based on their positive perceptions about the neighborhood school their children will be assigned to (Lankford, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1991). These families have, in effect, exercised choice. However, they may not favor school choice policy. Instead, to this group of people, school proximity to home is an important factor, and they argue that if parents are able to leave their assigned neighborhood schools, this will have a negative impact on these schools. In contrast, urban minority and poor families do not have the resources to choose higher quality schools by moving. These families are likely to favor school choice and are more likely to indicate that the school’s proximity to home is not a critical issue. They are willing to sacrifice the positives that come with being part of a neighborhood school in order to have their children attend a school they perceive to be excellent (Lee, 1994). Data collected by University of Colorado researchers (Howe, Eisenhart, & Betebenner, 2001) in their study of the effects of school choice in the Boulder Valley (Colorado) School District revealed that choice “skims” high-scoring students and grouped special needs students at the middle- and high-school levels. Both of these effects are, in part, attributable to the location of the schools of choice. Howe and associates concluded that location is an important variable to consider.
when analyzing which parents will choose, because the system favors parents that can visit schools and provide their own transportation.

The racial composition of the school of choice is also an important variable for poor and minority parents. Lee (1994) found that these families often consider a school's effectiveness with children who come from the same race and economic status as they do before they commit to choosing the school. Wells (1996), however, reported that the evidence from a study of low-income minority parents involved in St. Louis’s desegregation plan was mixed. Some believed that the suburban schools were better than city schools, even though they had no real data on which to base this belief. These parents just understood the suburban schools their children were being sent to were better and supported the plan. Others resisted desegregation plans simply because they did not want their minority children in all-white schools. These parents did not care if the schools their children were being sent to had more resources and higher achievement levels. Wells concluded that both race and class affect low-income minority parents’ perceptions of choice. Some parents will seek out schools that will help their students achieve; others will choose not to choose because they fear racism and they do not have faith in the educational system to protect their children from failure.

Research also suggests that school quality influences parent support of choice. Both Strate (1993) and Lee (1994) found that parents who gave their public schools a low rating were more likely to support choice. They also found that parents who gave their public schools a high rating often opposed choice on the grounds that choice could have an adverse effect on their schools. Many parents view school quality from the
perspective of values being promoted. They give high marks to schools they perceive as
promoting values they themselves hold dear. Some parents choose private schools
because of the emphasis the school places on shared values. Parents may also choose
charter schools because they perceive the charter school will emphasize shared values
(Horn & Miron, 2000). Families that stress the importance of religion are highly likely to
participate in choice by joining parents with similar beliefs either in religious private
schools or in charter schools (Martinez et al., 1996). Ausbrooks (1997b) compared the
values emphasized in the public, private, and charter schools of San Antonio, Texas, and
did not find a significant difference. He noted that all schools emphasized the importance
of developing an appropriate common sense of right and wrong. All schools also
emphasized the importance of learning. The only significant difference he found was in
the emphasis of religion in religious private schools.

Another variable that indicates parental willingness to be involved in choice
programs is the level of involvement parents want to have in their children’s education.
Overall, research suggests that parents who favor choice or choose private schools (in
addition to having more income and higher levels of education) are more involved with
their children’s school. Witte (1996) measured involvement in terms of parents
contacting schools, parents working with their children on academics at home, and
parents volunteering. These parents also have higher academic and extra-curricular
expectations (Martinez et al., 1996). Parents that choose have stronger feelings toward
religion and ethnic traditions. They are more likely to spend discretionary income to aid
their children’s education than to spend it on possessions. Parents that use voucher
programs to choose private schools and parents that take advantage of interdistrict public school choice are likely to expect their children to go to college (Witte, 1996). In general, the more parents indicate they want to be involved in their child's school, the more likely they are to participate in choice (Peterson & Campbell, 2001).

One reason parents choose their children's school is to emphasize academic achievement. The studies that examine the relationship between choice and academic achievement, however, are mixed. Several studies examining student outcomes in magnet schools are encouraging. Gamoran (1996) used data from the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Survey to look at the academic performance of 24,000 students in 48 magnet and 213 conventional high schools. He found that magnet school students "significantly outperformed their peers attending non-magnets in social studies, science, and reading" even though the schools were organizationally similar. The PACE report (Fuller et al., 1999) noted similar results in two studies. In both St. Louis and San Antonio, students in magnet schools outperformed neighborhood school students. Other researchers found less encouraging results. Adcock and Phillips (2000) found that students enrolled in Prince George's County, Maryland, magnet schools did perform better than their counterparts in nonmagnet schools. However, these researchers concluded that this was largely due to the fact that the students that enrolled in magnet schools were higher achieving in the first place. When student ability was taken into account, the research showed that students in magnet schools underperformed. Studies comparing academic achievement in public schools and other choice schools are mixed as well. Jay Greene's (2001) investigation of the CSF program in Charlotte, North
Carolina, found that choice students scored significantly higher in math and reading on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills but found it difficult to attest these results just to choice. He noted that the choice schools had smaller class sizes and higher levels of parent and student satisfaction, despite the prevalence of "poorly funded, amenity-starved" facilities and lower teacher salaries. Greene concluded that parents looking for higher student academic achievement are more likely to participate in choice, and that when they do participate, higher student academic achievement is in part a result of their own expectations and support.

The final variable that influences parental participation in choice that Hsieh (2000) identified is parent satisfaction with their school.

Overall, research shows that parents who are dissatisfied with their children's school have the tendency to look for alternatives for their children, either by participating in choice programs or looking for private schools. After parents made the choice for their children, parents tended to have higher satisfaction levels in the choice school than prior school. (p. 40)

In their evaluation of the CSF program, Peterson and Campbell (2001) found that a significant number of parents that applied for the scholarships cited dissatisfaction with their child's public school as an important reason why they applied. Parents cited discipline problems, including fighting, gangs, racial conflict, and drugs, as core reasons for their dissatisfaction. Witte (1993, 1996) found that parents participating in choice reported less satisfaction with their child's public school than parents with their children still in the public school. He also found that parents evaluated their new school of choice more positively than they evaluated their prior public school. Witte concluded that parent public school satisfaction level was a great predictor of their participation in choice. He
found that parent dissatisfaction was more likely to stem from internal factors like academics and discipline and had little to do with external factors like school location. Parents were sometimes dissatisfied with their children’s prior public school because their children had not done well in that school. Ogawa and Dutton (1997) surveyed over 1,800 urban parents in California and found that parents that are dissatisfied with their child’s school are more likely to seek interdistrict transfers and support vouchers. Researchers also found that parents that participate in school choice are more satisfied with their child’s school. Driscoll (1993) used data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 to compare public schools of choice with other public schools. He found that choice parents were profoundly more satisfied with their child’s school. In particular, these parents indicated that their child enjoyed school and was challenged by it, that the school was safe, and that the work assigned was more worthwhile. Lee et al. (1996) found that while a majority of Detroit area parents favor choice, those who are satisfied with their children’s school are less likely to. In particular, parents whose children are in private schools or in high-achieving suburban schools are likely to oppose choice. These parents oppose the changes in school programs necessary to establish a choice program because they believe the changes will undermine the quality of their local schools.

Conclusions

The literature points to a number of variables that influence whether parents will take advantage of choice. These variables fall into two general categories: family
characteristics and perceived school characteristics. Family characteristics variables include family income, parent education levels, race, student gender, and religious affiliation. Perceived school characteristic variables include school/home location, school race composition, school quality, parent involvement, student academic achievement, parent satisfaction with the school, and school religious affiliation. Researchers conclude that policymakers must have a deep understanding of each of these variables and how they relate to each other if they are going to use school choice as school improvement policy. Race, school location, religious affiliation, socioeconomics, and parent bias may all be variables that keep parents in underperforming schools from choosing. It is also important to note that the research shows that choice may be self-fulfilling. Parents that choose are more involved, have higher expectations, and are more satisfied. This makes it hard for the researcher to determine if an improved climate was the result of choice or a natural byproduct of "skimming" the parents that are likely to choose. Another important factor to note is that the most influential variable influencing choice is religious affiliation. The United States Constitution prohibits government support for religion and so far the courts have strictly limited choice policy that includes private religious schools. Finally, researchers point out that a careful look at the variables that influence choice shows that choice is a two-sided coin. Choice may lead to an improved climate in the schools that are being chosen, but it is also likely to leave a harmed climate in the schools that have been left.
School Climate Defined and Conceptualized

There is a powerful relationship between the school as an organization and the behavior of the people who work there. The influence the organization has on the people that work there and the influence the people that work there have on the organization is often described as the organization's climate. Teachers' on-the-job behaviors are determined in a significant part by the climate in which they work. A school's climate is by definition a subjective measure, so researchers have focused on developing common ways to describe it. School climate is often described as the school's personality, atmosphere, style, tone, or environment. It can be described as the set of characteristics that make up the total school environment (Owens, 1995). School climate is the set of characteristics that influences the behavior of teachers and identifies the school as unique. More specifically, school climate is the set of enduring qualities embedded in the school environment that, when experienced by teachers, influences their behaviors. It reflects and is defined by their collective perceptions (Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Hoy & Miskel, 2001). A number of researchers began to look at organizational climate in general and school climate in particular in the 1960s and 1970s. These researchers were part of the long-time effort to identify the elements of organizations that need to be taken into account when leadership attempts organizational improvement. Halpin and Croft (1962) pioneered the effort to conceptualize the organizational climate of a school. They visited and observed elementary schools and were struck by the different "feel" they found in the schools. These differences in feel seemed to result in schools having different climates much like people have different personalities. Halpin and Croft believed that
school climate was rooted in teacher-principal and teacher-teacher interactions. They identified eight dimensions of teacher-principal and teacher-teacher interactions and set out to map and measure them. They developed an instrument to measure and describe the organizational climate of elementary schools, the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ). The OCDQ uses the metaphor of openness to characterize school climate. The original OCDQ was used in hundreds of studies in the 1960s and 1970s, generating a great volume of research (Anderson, 1982), but over time the OCDQ became unreliable and obsolete. A revised version of the OCDQ for elementary schools has been developed (Hoy & Clover, 1986) and versions for middle (Hoy & Sabo, 1998) and high schools (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991) have been added. The high school version, called the Organizational Health Inventory, uses the metaphor of health instead of openness to describe school climate.

Hoy and Hoy (2003) summarized the results of the research done using the OCDQ. School climate has two key elements, the principals’ style of interacting with teachers and the teachers’ behavior in school. The principal’s style of interacting with teachers can be described in three ways—supportive, directive, and restrictive. Supportive principal behavior reflects genuine concern for the teachers. Supportive principals treat teachers as colleagues. They respect their professional expertise. Supportive principals assist teachers, compliment teachers, provide constructive criticism, and show concern for teachers’ personal welfare. Directive principal behavior is very task-oriented. Directive principals are direct and controlling. They observe, criticize, and constrain teachers. Communication and management is top down. Teacher
feedback is minimized. Directive principal behavior is best described as autocratic, rigid, and controlling. Restrictive principals are work-focused. Restrictive principals overload teachers with work that is not focused on the core mission of the school. They form too many committees and require too much paperwork. Restrictive principal behavior hinders rather than facilitates teachers' abilities to provide quality. Hoy and Hoy also describe the teachers' behavior in school in three ways—collegial, intimate, and disengaged. Collegial teacher behavior is supportive and professional. Collegial teachers respect their fellow teachers as professional, competent, and dedicated. They are pleased with their school and feel a sense of accomplishment in their teaching. Intimate teacher behavior is marked by close personal relationships among the teaching staff, both inside and outside the school. Teachers confide in each other and often find their closest friends among colleagues. Disengaged teacher behavior is marked by a general sense of separation and alienation. Disengaged teachers are not productive in group efforts. They see teaching as an individual task and are territorial, secretive, and argumentative.

These six aspects of the two key elements of school climate, considered together, map a profile of the climate of an individual school. Sample items from the OCDQ-RE for each of the six aspects are found in Table 1. A school climate profile rests on two factors of openness (Hoy & Clover, 1986; Hoy & Tarter, 1998). Faculty relations are considered open when teacher interactions are meaningful and tolerant (low disengagement), friendly, close, and supportive (high intimacy), and enthusiastic, accepting, and mutually respectful (high collegial relations). Principal behavior is considered open when principal-teacher interactions avoid the assignment of meaningless
routines and burdensome duties to teachers (low restrictiveness), are flexible and allow teachers to act independently (low directiveness), and are supportive and respectful both personally and professionally (high supportiveness).

Table 1

*Sample Items for Each Aspect of the OCDQ-RE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Behavior</th>
<th>Teacher Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive Behavior</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collegial Behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal uses constructive criticism.</td>
<td>Teachers help and support each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal compliments teachers.</td>
<td>Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal listens to and accepts teachers’ suggestions.</td>
<td>Teachers accomplish their work with vim, vigor, and pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directive Behavior</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intimate Behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal monitors everything the teachers do.</td>
<td>Teachers socialize with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal rules with an iron fist.</td>
<td>Teachers’ closest friends are other faculty members at this school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal checks lesson plans.</td>
<td>Teachers have parties for each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restrictive Behavior</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disengaged Behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are burdened with busywork.</td>
<td>Faculty meetings are useless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine duties interfere with the job of teaching.</td>
<td>There is a minority group of teachers who always oppose the majority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have too many committee meetings.</td>
<td>Teachers ramble when they talk at faculty requirements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hoy & Hoy, 2003, p. 286)
The two openness factors are relatively independent (Hoy & Hoy, 2003) and therefore the results of the questionnaire can be used to categorize a school as having one of four distinct types of school climate: open, engaged, disengaged, or closed.

An open school climate is the result of open teacher-teacher interactions and open principal-teacher interactions. It is distinguished by the cooperation and respect found within the faculty and between the faculty and the principal. Schools with open climates are places where principals listen to teachers, give frequent praise, and respect teachers as professionals. They are also places where teachers support each other professionally and personally. Teachers are often close personal friends.

An engaged school climate is the result of open teacher-teacher interactions but closed principal-teacher interactions. Schools with engaged climates are places where principals are controlling and autocratic. Principals hinder teacher efforts with burdensome activities and busywork. Teachers working in engaged climates ignore the principals' behavior and conduct themselves as professionals. They respect and support each other and work well together. In general, teachers in engaged school climates are productive, committed, cohesive professionals in spite of weak principal leadership.

A disengaged school climate is the result of open principal-teacher interactions but closed teacher-teacher interactions. Schools with disengaged climates are places where principals are open, concerned, and supportive. They listen well and encourage teachers to act on their professional knowledge. Teachers are not burdened with meaningless paperwork and committee work. Teachers working in disengaged climates, however, are not willing to accept their principals. They ignore their principals'
leadership attempts and generally do not like or respect their principals. In general, in spite of their principals' best efforts, teachers in disengaged school climates are intolerant, uncooperative, and uncommitted.

A closed school climate is the result of closed teacher-teacher interactions and closed principal-teacher interactions. In schools with closed climates, the principals and teachers just go through the motions. Principals lead by stressing the status quo, routine, and busywork, and teachers respond by doing just what it takes to get by. Teachers view their principals as unconcerned and unresponsive. Furthermore, they see their principals as controlling and rigid. In general, closed climates have unsympathetic, inflexible principals and divisive, apathetic, intolerant teachers.

Hoy and Hoy (2003) also summarized the results of the research done using the OHI to assess school climate. Like the OCDQ, the OHI is a descriptive questionnaire that assesses school climate. It measures seven specific aspects of school health identified by its developers, Hoy, Tartar, and Kottkamp (1991) as crucial dimensions of the interaction patterns of life in schools. These seven patterns of behavior are institutional integrity, principal influence, consideration, initiating structure, resource support, morale, and academic emphasis. Teachers and principals are asked to use a 4-point scale—rarely occurs, sometimes occurs, often occurs, and very frequently occurs—to indicate how well items in the questionnaire describe their school. Sample items for each dimension of the OHI are found in Figure 2.

The results of the OHI are used to describe a school's climate as healthy or unhealthy. The school scores for each dimension are standardized so that the mean is
### School Level

**Institutional Integrity**
- Teachers are protected from unreasonable community and parental demands.
- The school is open to the whims of the public. *

**Administration Level**

**Principal Influence**
- The principal is able to influence the actions of his or her peers.
- The principal is impeded by superiors. *

**Consideration**
- The principal is friendly and approachable.
- The principal looks out for the personal welfare of faculty members.

**Initiating Structure**
- The principal lets faculty members know what is expected of them.
- The principal maintains definite standards of performance.

**Resource Support**
- Teachers receive necessary classroom supplies.
- Supplementary materials are available for classroom use.

### Technical Level

**Morale**
- There is a feeling of trust and confidence among the staff.
- Teachers in this school are cool and aloof to each other. *

**Academic Emphasis**
- The learning environment is orderly and serious.
- This school set high standards for academic performance.

*These items are scored in reverse.

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Figure 2. Items for Each Dimension of the OHI.

500. The scores are then summed, averaged, and interpreted. A school with average health has a score of 500. A healthy school has a score above 610. Research findings using the OHI have added to education scholars’ understanding of how school climate impacts other aspects of school. There is an atmosphere conducive to improved teaching

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and learning in healthy schools. Also, student achievement is fostered by a healthy school climate (Hoy & Hannum, 1998; Hoy & Sabo, 1998). The research shows a strong correlation between health and openness. There is a greater degree of faculty trust in the principal and trust in colleagues in healthy schools. Student achievement, school quality, school effectiveness, leadership, culture, and teacher participation are all impacted positively by school health. Healthy schools facilitate improved teaching and learning by fostering an atmosphere conducive to growth. Like effective schools, healthy school attributes include high but attainable goals, an orderly and serious environment, dynamic leaders, and collegial staffs. In summary, school health, as measured using the OHI, is a practical way to characterize school climate. The dynamics that lead to a school being labeled healthy are necessary conditions for effective school improvement. The principal must have a positive, healthy climate to be an effective leader.

Renato Tagiuri (1968) was one of the first researchers to describe the total school climate in detail. According to Tagiuri, the total school climate is the sum of four sets of factors or dimensions:

- A school's *ecology* refers to its physical dimension. The physical dimension includes the school’s age, size, design and condition. It also includes all the material resources available to teachers at the school.

- A school’s *milieu* refers to its social dimension. The social dimension includes all the characteristics of the people in the school. The race, gender, and socioeconomic status of the students and teachers in the school are social
factors. Teacher education levels, student and teacher morale and motivation, and job satisfaction levels are also examples of social factors.

- A school’s *social system* refers to its organizational dimension. The organizational dimension includes how the school is organized, how decisions are made, and how information is shared. This dimension is largely the result of factors the school administrator controls or influences.

- A school’s *culture* refers to the values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms held by the people in the school. It is best described as “the way we do things around here.”

Tagiuri concluded that a close look at these dimensions reveals that administrators strongly influence the climate of the school and that they must understand the ties between the choices they make and the climate of the school to be effective.

Kolb, Rubin, and McIntyre (1979) further developed Halpin and Croft’s (1962) description of school climate as being either open or closed. Their research identified seven dimensions of climate that lead to an open school climate:

*Conformity*—In open schools, teachers feel little pressure to conform from the principal or colleagues. Individual efforts are respected and not viewed as threats. Staff members do not view the organization’s rules, policies, and procedures as inhibiting.

*Responsibility*—In open schools, teachers and principals take personal responsibility for school quality and for achieving organizational goals. They feel they can take actions necessary to ensure student achievement and school
improvement without having superiors looking over their shoulders every step of the way.

Standards—In open schools, quality and improvement are measured against stated standards. Standards are research-based and reviewed. Open school staff members feel the organization sets challenging goals for itself and communicates these goals clearly.

Rewards—Open schools are places where excellence is rewarded. Principals in open schools look for opportunities to celebrate significant achievements with staff members. Teachers feel that they will be rewarded and recognized for good work and that failures will be handled with grace.

Clarity—Open schools have organizational clarity. They are well-run places. Principals are excellent managers in schools with organizational clarity. Teachers are given meaningful work and see the importance of the tasks they are given in school improvement efforts.

Warmth and support—The relationships between all staff members in open schools are supportive. Friendliness is a valued norm. Colleagues encourage each other, work together as teammates, and cooperate. Staff members trust each other and respect each other as professionals.

Leadership—In open schools, there is a willingness to accept directions and leadership from qualified members. The principal provides effective leadership that is focused on a clearly defined and commonly held vision of school quality and effectiveness. Teachers support and respect the principal.
Kolb et al. (1979) used their seven dimensions to develop the Organizational Climate Questionnaire (OCQ). This questionnaire has been widely used to assess present school climate and has proven a valuable resource for schools planning change and improvement initiatives.

Another early researcher, Matthew Miles (1969), also used the metaphor of health to describe school climate. Miles described 10 dimensions that could be used to describe a school's climate as either healthy or unhealthy:

*Goal focus*—Staff members in healthy schools have clear understanding of the goals of the organization. They are dedicated to achieving them. Healthy schools set goals that are appropriate and achievable.

*Communication adequacy*—Information travels distortion free in healthy schools. This is true horizontally, from teacher to teacher, and vertically, from the top down. Just like a healthy person “knows himself,” the members of a healthy school have the information they need to work effectively.

*Optimal power equalization*—In healthy schools, power is distributed evenly so that all members of the organization see all other members of the organization as collaborators. Having a common cause and teamwork motivates members, not coercion.

*Resource utilization*—In healthy schools, staff members are used effectively. They are not burdened with unnecessary busywork. There is a good fit between the work people think they should be doing and the work they are actually doing.
People feel good about their jobs and feel they are growing as individuals and as members of the staff.

*Cohesiveness*—Staff members in healthy schools have a positive sense of belonging to the organization. They know what the organization stands for and they are proud to be a part of it.

*Morale*—Staff members in a healthy school derive a sense of satisfaction, well-being, and pleasure from being members of the organization. The school is not a source of anxiety or dissatisfaction.

*Innovativeness*—A healthy school adapts well to change. It develops new goals and processes to meet new needs. Staff members are expected to value innovation and invention.

*Autonomy*—Healthy schools are relatively independent from the influence of educational fads. Members have the ability (and expertise) to analyze for themselves the appropriateness of suggested changes for their school.

*Adaptation*—Healthy schools understand the complexity and many variables of the environment they are working in. They work to adapt their resources to the needs of the community. At the same time, they help the community adapt to the needs of the school. Healthy schools are able to change themselves and the community they are in so that problems are solved.

*Problem-solving adequacy*—Problems are an inevitable part of the life of all schools. Healthy schools are able to respond to problems with a minimum amount of effort. Problems stay solved in healthy organizations. Problems are
sensed and solved before they can tear apart the school. Staff members in healthy schools know the procedures that are followed to solve problems.

In summary, the work of these pioneer researchers and their modern followers clearly connects the climate of a school to the nature of the teacher-teacher and principal-teacher relationships in the school. These relationships can be categorized and measured. Metaphors can be used to understand more clearly. School climate can help or hinder teachers and principals as they seek to satisfy their needs at work, and therefore, it is a key factor in school improvement (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). One widely respected way to define school climate is to categorize it as open or closed. Forty years after Halpin and Croft first described school climate using these terms, they are still a powerful basis for measuring and understanding school climate. This understanding of school climate will be the one used in this dissertation as we look at whether choice affects climate and therefore influences school improvement. First, however, there is one more foundational concept that needs to be understood.

School Climate and School Culture: Culture Defined and Conceptualized

As researchers worked to conceptualize and define school climate in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, it became clear that another distinct but related concept was emerging that needed to be understood along side of school climate—school culture. One of the early researchers to describe school culture in connection with school climate was Renato Tagiuri (1968). Tagiuri described culture as one of four distinct dimensions of climate. He defined culture as the set of psycho-social characteristics that make up
climate. Specifically, culture is the norms, belief systems, and values shared by people in the school community, whereas climate is the way things are done in the school system based on the perceptions of people about the norms, belief systems, and values they share. These concepts about culture have been unpacked and developed by many of education's leading theorists and researchers in the last 25 years. William Ouchi (1981) compared Japanese and American management styles. He showed that Japanese managers paid more attention to human relations and worked harder to understand and satisfy the needs of their workers. The thoughts and ideas of workers were a valued part of Japanese organizational life. As a result, workers were more deeply committed to the success of the organization. Ouchi concluded that he had found the underlying reason that Japanese corporations were more successful than their American counterparts. Peters and Waterman (1982) followed up Ouchi's work with research that showed that what Ouchi was talking about could be described as an organization's culture. They showed that highly successful American companies followed the lead of the Japanese and showed concern for the understanding and development of the values, beliefs, and behavioral norms of the people in the organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982) further clarified what culture is. Their research showed that, simply put, shared values means "what is important to most people," beliefs means "what most people think is true," and behavioral norms means "how we do things around here."

Owens (1995) defined culture in terms of norms and assumptions. Norms are the rules of behavior that enforce behaviors in the organization. They are unwritten but
commonly understood by organization members. Finally, norms are shared beliefs that inform members of the organization about what behavior is appropriate for members.

Assumptions are the beliefs that norms and all other aspects of culture are based on. They are the basis of what members of the organization accept as true or false, doable or impossible, and right or wrong. Assumptions are not values because they are not up for debate. Instead they are simply and unconsciously accepted as true.

Schein (1985, 1999) defined culture as the body of solutions to problems that has consistently worked in the organization. These assumptions about reality, truth, time, human nature, human activity, and human relationships become part of the organization. Finally, over time these assumptions become taken for granted. Using studies that suggested there are seven basic elements that shape school culture (innovation, stability, attention to detail, outcome orientation, people orientation, team orientation, and aggressiveness), Schein mapped school cultures by measuring the degree to which different elements are dominant. Schein's research led him to conclude that cultures are deep, broad, and stable. Culture makes change difficult.

Bolman and Deal (1991) found that much of what occurs in a school can be understood only if it is examined through the unique lens of the school culture. This is complex and difficult because:

- Events are often not what they seem.
- Meaning is often hidden.
- Events are often puzzling and the future problematic.
- Organizational problems are often not solved rationally.
• Explanations are often invented to resolve conflict and create positive outcomes.
• Myths, rituals, ceremonies, and stories are often used to give people the meanings they seek.

Bolman and Deal assert that it is important for school leaders to understand the culture if they are to be effective. One of the important roles of principals is to look at challenges through a cultural lens. Good leaders shape and develop culture.

Schein (1985) suggests that although there is no one culture that is best for every school, there are some common basic assumptions that are at the heart of healthy school culture:

• Teachers and students are proactive problem solvers and learners.
• Teachers and principals are willing to search for problem solutions together using whatever tools work.
• Teachers are open to improvement.
• Creativity and innovation are central to student learning.
• There is a place for individualism and teamwork in staff work.
• Information and communication are at the center of school staff interactions.
• Diversity is a celebrated resource that is used to enhance learning.
• Staff uses both challenge and support to foster learning.
• Staff understands that school is a complex place where multiple causes are more likely than single causes.

Schools with such assumptions are places where all group members foster improvement.
In her studies comparing highly successful and less successful American corporations, Rosabeth Moss Kantor (1983) found that an organization's culture has a great influence on the feelings and attitudes of the people that are part of the organization. Kantor generalized that in high-performing organizations culture is marked by a pride in belonging. People feel their work is valuable and their contributions are cherished. Problems are seen as stimulating challenges, and people work to see the big picture. That is, they seek to understand how their work and contributions add to the whole. Kantor labeled this culture in high-performing organizations as integrative. Kantor labeled less successful organizations as segmented. Members in segmented organizations focus on their own little piece of the organization without considering how their work fits into the efforts of the organization as a whole. Management keeps people isolated in their own little corner of the organization.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) approach culture from the question of how it impacts change. They use Lundberg's (1985) four levels of culture—artifacts, perspectives, values, and assumptions—as a basis to analyze a school's culture. They assert that school leaders must identify and understand the school culture as they seek to influence change. Sergiovanni and Starratt encourage school leaders to analyze various aspects of the culture in their school by looking at the school's history and traditions, beliefs, norms, values, and patterns of behavior. Using this framework, school leaders develop their own inventory of their school's culture. They cite several examples and conclude that while systemic change is difficult under any circumstances, effective leaders assess the school climate and culture to make sure they support the psychological
and symbolic needs of the teachers. Supervisors cannot improve teaching and learning unless they first develop and nurture the right climate and culture.

Conclusions About Climate, Culture, and School Improvement

The basic conclusion of the research is that certain common school climate and culture characteristics support and nurture school change and improvement. The goal of researchers and theorists is to first describe the common characteristics of supportive climates and cultures. Then they must describe ways to assess school culture and climate so that school leaders can use the understandings they gain to facilitate change and ultimately improvement. Different researchers have developed surveys to help them define, conceptualize, and categorize climate and culture. This approach has been effective for climate, since climate deals with perceptions people have. Perceptions can be measured and cataloged easily using a questionnaire. Culture, however, does not lend itself to being easily understood through a questionnaire. Surveys can measure only climate, not culture. Collecting, sorting, and summarizing cultural data is work that needs qualitative research methods. The work of Ouchi, Kantor, and Bolman and Deal demonstrates that it is necessary to get inside the organization and to talk with the people in the organization if you want a true understanding of the culture of the organization (Owens, 1995; Schein 1999; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993).

Schools that support and nurture change and improvement have climates that are often described as open or healthy. Researchers agree that school climate is best measured through the lens of teacher and principal perceptions. Summarizing the work
of various researchers, open or healthy school climates have the following characteristics:

- Principals provide supportive leadership.
  - They listen to teachers.
  - They compliment teachers.
  - They are encouraging.
  - They communicate well.
  - They provide needed resources.
  - They facilitate and promote a clear common understanding of the goals of the organization.
  - They reward excellence.
  - They are friendly and approachable.

- Teachers are collegial.
  - They help and support each other.
  - They respect the professional competence of each other.
  - They are enthusiastic towards and enjoy their work.
  - There is a great deal of collaboration among staff members.
  - They share beliefs and values regarding what the organization is about.
  - They participate in making important educational decisions in the school.

This study is investigating the link between school choice and school climate. School climate will be described as open and healthy or closed and unhealthy. School climate influences a school’s capacity to improve. Schools that have open and healthy
climates have a greater capacity to improve. Open and healthy climates will be defined as a climate where principals provide supportive leadership and teachers are collegial. This study is asking the basic research question, “Does school climate differ among private religious schools, charter schools, and public schools?” If the data show that choice is linked to an open and healthy school climate, then policymakers and lawmakers will have one more reason to forward choice as a tool our nation must use to improve our schools.

Summary of the Literature Examining School Choice and School Climate

There is a well-developed body of literature that examines the influence of school climate on school improvement. There is also a body of literature that examines the influence school choice on school improvement. There is not, however, an extensive body of literature that examines the association between school choice and school climate. Since the purpose of this study is to add to this body of literature, the last task to be completed before the data are examined must be a summary of the literature linking school choice to school climate. This is a relatively young topic in terms of educational research. This study is using data generated by the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). SASS is a set of surveys conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) as part of a comprehensive longitudinal studies designed to give researchers access to longitudinal data. SASS data have been generated in 1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000. Data from these studies have been used by researchers to explore questions relating to the association of school choice with
school climate. Research using the data generated by SASS also provides references to studies that have focused on the topic.

Mark Royal, Karen DeAngelis, and Robert Rossi (1996), researchers at the American Institutes for Research, used data from the 1987-1988 SASS and the 1993-1994 SASS to compare teachers' sense of community in public and private schools. They examined teacher perceptions of (a) the extent to which they shared goals, beliefs, and expectations; (b) the extent to which governance procedures involved and supported them; and (c) the extent to which relations among staff members were collegial and cooperative. Royal, DeAngelis and Rossi showed that according to teachers, the sense of community was greater in private schools than in public schools. Earlier research suggested that larger school staffs are less likely to have a strong sense of community (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988), but they found this to be true regardless of school size. These researchers suggested further study to determine whether the differences in public and private school teachers' sense of community are related to other aspects of their school environments or to differences in the nature of their professional experiences.

Susan Choy (1997) used national data, including the 1993-1994 SASS results, to comprehensively compare public and private schools. Her discussion begins by identifying and then examining the two fundamental differences between public and private schools: their sources of income and the role of choice in determining where students go to school. Choy points out that among private schools, religious schools are distinct in that they collect and spend less than half the dollars per student that nonsectarian schools collect and spend. In terms of spending, private religious schools
are comparable to public schools. She also points out that there is some choice in public schools. She does not account for charter schools in her findings but acknowledges that charter schools represent a different category of school to be included in future studies. In comparing teachers and school climate in public and private schools, Choy concludes the following:

- More students with personal problems that interfere with learning tend to attend public schools.
- Public school teachers tend to be better qualified to teach the subject they are teaching in public schools.
- Parents that exercise choice tend to be more satisfied with their school, public and private.
- Teacher attrition is higher in private school.
- Teachers are more satisfied with their working conditions in private schools.
- Public schools tend to have larger enrollments.
- Average class size is larger in public schools.
- Private school principals and teachers believe they have more influence over school policy decisions than their public school counterparts. Private schools are safer.
- Public school teachers feel less support from students than private school teachers.
- Public school teachers feel less parental support than private school teachers.
Private school teachers share a greater sense of community within their schools. This shared sense of community is characterized by shared goals, beliefs, and expectations.

In her summary, Choy states that private schools seem to offer teachers a greater sense of peer, parental, administrative, and student support. She warns, however, that there is much variation in each sector and that this must be taken into account when making generalizations.

David Baker, Mei Han, and Charles Keil (1996) examined selected organizational characteristics of public and private secondary schools using the 1990-1991 SASS results. They built upon earlier NCES reports that compared public and private schools as organizations. The salient analysis question they asked was, to what extent does being public or private predict organizational characteristics in schools? Unlike Choy’s study, where important, these researchers split private into Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian. The organizational characteristics they looked at were:

- educational goals,
- professionalization of principals,
- teacher compensation,
- size of administrative staff,
- school-based control, and
- curricular emphasis.

Baker, Han, and Kiel cite a number of findings that relate to the comparison of public, private, and even to some extent, religious schools in regards to school climate and
Private schools tend to include teachers more in making key decisions about hiring, curriculum, and student discipline. Teachers in religious schools are more likely to be committed to the school's educational goals. This is most true when they report the most important goal they have is the fostering of religious or spiritual development. In general, all schools hold the goal of academic excellence equally dear. Finally, private school students do report higher achievement when measured by the number of advanced courses they complete.

In a survey of 100 teachers from 16 charter schools and 100 teachers from 7 nearby schools, Sally Bomotti, Rick Ginsberg, and Brian Cobb (1999) asked about perceptions of teacher empowerment, school climate, and working conditions. Results show that the differences are significant, with charter school teachers reporting a greater sense of administrative support, parent support, peer support, and student support. Charter school teachers reported a greater sense of empowerment to make decisions. This study aligns the school climate of charter schools with the school climate of private schools.

Contributions of the Study

This study is intended to contribute to our knowledge of the role choice can play as educational policy aimed at driving school improvement. The study assumes that school improvement is linked to school climate. It will examine how selected, generally accepted characteristics of school climate compare in private religious, charter, and public schools. The goal is to look at whether choice is associated with climate. The
inference will be that if choice is associated with climate and climate influences school improvement and quality, then policymakers can influence school improvement and quality by implementing choice policy. The findings and conclusions of this study will provide knowledge for looking at whether and how school choice is associated with school climate. This knowledge will be valuable for policymakers as they determine the extent and form choice will take in the future. This study is able to generalize its findings to the national scene because it uses national data. The study will provide valuable knowledge to educators responsible for implementing choice policies aimed at improving schools. This study is more policy than theory-oriented.

Research Purpose and Questions

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether choice is associated with school climate. The findings and conclusions will provide knowledge to educators and policymakers for deciding the role choice will play in school improvement efforts.

Research Questions

The basic research question for this study asks if school climate differs among public, charter, and private religious schools. The study examines the association of choice with school climate in general by looking at the association of choice with six specific characteristics of school climate. The specific research questions examined in this study include:
• Are principals more likely to provide supportive leadership depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

• Are teachers more likely to be collegial depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

• Are teachers and principals more likely to have healthy relationships with each other depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

• Are teachers more likely to be satisfied with their work depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

• Is the frequency of student behavior problems, as reported by teachers, more likely to be lower in public, charter, or private religious schools?

• Is the frequency of student behavior problems, as reported by principals, more likely to be lower in public, charter, or private religious schools?

• Are teachers more likely to have power to influence decisions that impact their ability to teach in a public, charter, or private religious school?

(Note: the frequency of student behavior problems is examined for the point of view of teachers and principals.)

The analysis of the specific research questions will lead to conclusions and inferences about the association of choice with school climate in general.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the influence school choice has on school climate. Various aspects of school climate are used to compare climate at private religious schools, charter schools, and assigned public schools. This chapter discusses the methodological issues that include (a) secondary data, (b) sample, (c) research design, (d) research procedure, and (e) hypothesis and data analysis.

Secondary Data

The study used existing national data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. The data were collected via a teacher survey, a principal survey, and a school survey. Surveys were sent to private religious schools, charter schools, and assigned public schools. The data used in this study were collected in the 1999-2000 school year. The teacher survey collected information about teachers, such as teaching field, teaching workload, and teaching experience. The section of the teacher survey pertinent to this study asked teachers about their influence on staffing, budgeting, and instructional policies as well as their perception of various issues about teaching. The principal survey collected information about the training, experience, professional background and characteristics of school principals. The section of the principal survey pertinent to this study asked principals for their views about goals and problems in their school and for information about
governance and teacher professional development in their school. The purpose of the school survey was to collect information about schools such as policies, staffing patterns, student characteristics, programs and services offered, and activities related to various school reform issues. This type of data is called secondary data. Secondary data is defined as data gathered by a prior agency or investigator and analyzed by a secondary agency or investigator (Best & Kahn, 1993). Generally, the second look at the data will involve new hypotheses, experimental designs, and/or methods of analysis. In this study the data were gathered by the NCES. It has been used to propose hypotheses that will be analyzed using alternative methods of analysis.

It is important to note that researchers point out that secondary analysis does have some advantages. Often the new investigator asks new questions and designs new hypotheses to be tested. These questions and hypotheses are the result of looking at the data from a fresh point of view. In addition, the new investigator may have specialized expertise in the area of investigation and may have greater skill in experimental design and statistical analysis. Finally, it is often more time-consuming and costly to engage in reanalysis when the data already available are statistically relevant and sufficient for the study purpose.

Sample

The data for this study were taken from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The Schools and Staffing Survey is an integrated set of surveys sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that is collected from
public, private, public charter, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools nationwide. SASS provides information about teachers and administrators and the general condition of America’s elementary and secondary schools. The 1999-2000 SASS consisted of the following six components: the School District Survey, the Principal Survey, the School Survey, the Teacher Survey, the School Library and Media Center Survey, and the Teacher Follow-up Survey. The 1999-2000 SASS was the fourth administration of the SASS. For each administration, the NCES has reviewed the content to expand, retain, or eliminate topics covered in the previous administration. This study used Teacher Survey results and Principal Survey results from surveys collected from public, private, and public charter schools. In particular, this study used a subset of the private school surveys that includes only private religious schools.

Sampling Frames

The SASS was designed to provide for research at the national, regional, and state levels for school districts, schools, principals, teachers, and library media centers. For the purpose of this study, only data collected from public schools, private religious schools, and public charter schools need to be considered, although data were also collected from Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. The public school survey frame was based on the 1997-1998 school year Common Core of Data (CCD), a file collected annually by NCES from state education agencies. This is commonly understood to be the most complete list of public schools available. After taking into account special circumstances and deleting duplicate schools, the sampling frame included 88,266
schools. The private school sampling frame was based on 1997-1998 Private School Survey (PSS). This survey, derived from affiliation lists, lists 28,164 private schools, broken down into 20 different affiliation groups. It was necessary to use the PSS because state coverage of private schools, as reported in the CCD, was uneven. Researchers can use these affiliation groups to then divide the subgroup of religiously affiliated private schools from the full list. The public charter school sampling frame was based on a list developed by the OERI as described in *The State of Charter Schools 2000* (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). It was necessary to use the OREI list because not all states listed public charter schools on the CCD.

**Primary Samples**

Schools are the primary sampling unit in SASS. Public schools were selected to be representative at the state and national levels. Private schools were selected to representative at the association and national levels. The primary public charter school sample included all schools open during the 1998-1999 school year and still at the start of the 1999-2000 school year. Once schools were chosen for the survey, school districts associated with the selected school districts were included in the survey. The principal and teachers from each selected school were included in the sample. Table 2 shows the number of principals and teachers included in the 1999-2000 SASS sample.

**Sample Weighting**

All sample subsets for the SASS 1999-2000 were weighted to provide relevant estimates. The public school sample was weighted to produce state and national
Table 2

*Primary Sample Numbers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14,697*</td>
<td>9,893</td>
<td>3,558</td>
<td>1,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>72,058*</td>
<td>56,354</td>
<td>10,760</td>
<td>4,438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Totals include principals and teacher samples from Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.


estimates for districts, schools, teachers, and principals. The private religious school sample was weighted to produce national and affiliation group estimates for schools, teachers and principals. The public charter school sample was weighted to produce national and regional estimates for schools, teachers, and principals. Each component of SASS is weighted separately. The weighting procedures have three purposes: to take account of the probability a school will be selected, to reduce any bias that could result from unit nonresponse, and to make use of information available from external sources to improve the ability of the sample estimates to predict. Weighting procedures followed several general stages:

- Basic Weight: the inverse of the probability of a sampling unit being selected.
- Sampling Adjustment Factor: adjusts for any alteration in the probability of a sampling unit being selected.
• Noninterview Adjustment Factors: adjusts the weights of interviewed cases to account for sample cases eligible for interview but not interviewed.

• First Stage Ratio Adjustment Factor: controls the sample estimates to the sampling frame totals thereby accounting for deficiencies in the sample selected.

• Second Stage Ratio Adjustment: controls the SASS sample estimates to the PSS totals. This adjustment makes the SASS estimates agree with PSS totals for key characteristics.

• Teacher Adjustment Factor: controls the teacher counts from the teacher files to the teacher counts from the school files.

Table 3 shows the 1999-2000 SASS sample sizes and the weighted response rates.

While the purpose of this study is to determine if school choice can be associated with school climate, it is important to note that this paper is not intended to infer cause if differences are found. Table 4 provides basic comparative statistics for the three sample groups used in this study. The table provides statistics for all private schools, not just private religious schools, but is relevant since 89.7% of the private schools in the sample for this study are schools with a religious affiliation. Table 4 shows that there are differences in the samples that could be significant factors in explaining the school climate differences in the three groups. These variables must be taken into account by future researchers seeking to infer causes for why school choice is associated with school climate.
Table 3

SASS Sample Sizes and Weighted Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public School Teachers</td>
<td>56,354</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School Principals</td>
<td>9,893</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School Teachers</td>
<td>10,760</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private School Principals</td>
<td>3,558</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School Teachers</td>
<td>4,438</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School Principals</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design

The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) given in 1999-2000 is a set of surveys designed to be given primarily to principals and teachers. These detailed questionnaires are designed to measure policy issues that include teacher shortage and demand, characteristics of elementary and secondary teachers, teacher workplace conditions, characteristics of principals, and school programs and policies. SASS includes six survey components: the School District Questionnaire, the Principal Questionnaire, the School Questionnaire, the Teacher Questionnaire, the School Library Media Center Questionnaire, and the Teacher Follow-up Questionnaire. Individual questionnaires were modified to accommodate the organizational and structural differences of public, private, public charter, and BIA school sectors.
Table 4

1999-2000 SASS Sample School Description: Weighted Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Location</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Urban Schools</td>
<td>11,534</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>19,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Suburban Schools</td>
<td>10,860</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>37,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Rural Schools</td>
<td>4,829</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>26,404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Grade Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>16,303</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>49,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>8,190</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>2,508</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>18,145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participate in Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10,178</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>81,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10,401</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>6,644</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1,405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean School Size                | 316     | 264     | 637    |

The School District Questionnaires were filled out by central office personnel. They gathered information on enrollment and teacher counts, graduation requirements, district policies, teacher hiring, teacher compensation, accountability, and other measures of recent reforms. Data on the race/ethnicity of the student and teacher populations were also collected.

The School Questionnaires were filled out by school principals. They gathered school condition information such as student characteristics, high school graduation...
rates, length of day, staffing patterns, student/teacher ratios, types of programs and services offered, and length of school day. The private school version of the questionnaire included items that identified the religious or other affiliation of the school.

The Principal Questionnaires asked for information about the age, sex, race/ethnicity, salary, experience, training, benefits, opinions, and attitudes of the school principals. The questionnaire included objective (e.g., number of years teaching experience) and subjective (e.g., rating the seriousness of school problems) questions. The data from these questionnaires were intended to provide insight into the problems principals view as serious, their perceptions of their influence on school policies, and their qualifications.

The Teacher Questionnaires collected data from teachers regarding their education and training, teaching assignment, experience, certification, workload, perceptions and attitudes about teaching, job mobility, and workplace conditions. The original intent of the data was to permit analysis of affect movement out of and into the teaching profession. Practically, however, the data invite analysis of a variety of topics suggested by school policy and reform.

The School Library Media Center Questionnaires gathered information about media centers including experience and education of the library staff, organization, expenditure, technology, and media collections.

The sample design for the SASS balanced a number of key analytical domains. School, district, teacher, and principal samples were balanced on the national level, the elementary level, the secondary level, the public school level, the private school level,
and the charter school level. Public schools were additionally balanced by state, and private schools were additionally balanced by association group, region, and school level. Various statistical means were used to obtain these balanced samples. For example, selecting schools using a probability proportionate to the square root of the number of teachers in the schools obtained a balanced teacher sample. Teachers in the selected schools were then sampled at a rate that made the overall probability of them being selected constant within strata. At least 1 and no more than 20 teachers from any one school were sampled. The design sample also controlled sample overlap between SASS and other known school surveys.

Research Procedures

The U.S. Census Bureau collected the data for SASS 1999-2000. Data collection began by sending letters to sampled schools and districts in August and September. School questionnaires were mailed in October and a reminder postcard was sent a few weeks later. Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were used to follow up with nonresponding teachers and principals. The U.S. Census Bureau performed the data processing with the completed surveys. Each questionnaire was coded for whether it contained a completed interview, a respondent refused to complete it, a school district merged with another school district, or a school closed. Questionnaires were then sorted as interviews, noninterviews, or out of scope. A computer pre-edit program checked the interviews for predictable errors and made corrections. After these pre-edit corrections were made, the questionnaire was given a range check, a consistency edit, and a blank
edit. The coding, sorting, and editing process allowed a final determination of whether
the questionnaire was eligible for the survey, that is, whether there were enough data for
the questionnaire to classify as an interview.

SASS used four methods to impute values for questionnaire items that
respondents did not answer.

• They used data from other similar items on the questionnaire.
• They extracted data from a related component of SASS.
• They extracted data from the sample frame (PSS or CCD).
• They extracted data from the record for a sample case with similar
  characteristics.

SASS conducted re-interviews of about 10% of all schools and principals in the
sample. Questionnaires were sent 3 or 4 weeks after the first questionnaire. CATI re-
interviews took place 1 or 2 weeks later. The results of these re-interviews were
analyzed taking into account item inconsistency.

Hypotheses and Data Analysis

This study sought to answer the basic research question: Do public, charter, or
private religious schools differ in their school climate? For this study, an open/healthy
school climate has been defined as one with these characteristics:

1. Principals provide supportive leadership.
2. Teachers are collegial.
3. Teachers and principals have healthy relationships with each other.
4. Teachers are satisfied with their work.

5. The frequency of student behavior problems is relatively low.

6. Teachers have power to control decisions that impact their ability to teach.

Measurement Scale

The researcher used the public release data file for the SASS 1999-2000. In particular, this study used the data from the teacher surveys and the principal surveys given to public schools, private religious schools, and charter schools. The items have different measurement scales depending on the nature of the response. Teachers and principals responded to the items with:

- "1" strongly agree to "4" strongly disagree
- "1" serious problem to "4" not a problem
- "1" certainly would to "5" certainly would not
- "1" as long as I am able, to "4" leave as soon as I can ("undecided" responses were excluded)
- "1" no influence to "5" a great deal of influence
- "1" no control to "5" complete control
- "yes" or "no"
- "1" never to "4" every day

More information on the measurement scale used for specific items is provided in the following section. This section states each research question and its corresponding null hypothesis. The following hypotheses were provided to answer the stated research
questions. The answers to the stated research questions were then summarized to infer an answer to the basic research question.

*Research Question 1*

Are principals more likely to provide supportive leadership depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

Variables of supportive principal leadership measured by the SASS 1999-2000 teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 5.

*Null Hypothesis*

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

The first research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether the three groups—public, charter and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable
has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

Table 5

*Description of Research Question 1 Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school administration’s behavior towards the staff is supportive and encouraging</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My principal enforces school rules for student behavior and backs me up when I need it.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal talks with me frequently about my instructional practices.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this school members are recognized for a job well done.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

Are teachers more likely to be collegial depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

Variables of teacher collegiality measured by the SASS 1999-2000 teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 6.

Table 6

Description of Research Question 2 Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the past 12 months have you participated in regularly collaboration with other teachers on issues of instruction?</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 2 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of their courses with that of other teachers.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null Hypothesis

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers are more likely to be collegial.
The second research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether the three groups—public, charter and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

Research Question 3

Are teachers and principals more likely to have healthy relationships with each other depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

Variables of healthy relationships between teachers and principals measured by the SASS 1999-2000 principal and teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 7. The first two items are from the principal questionnaire and the last two items are from the teacher questionnaire. The data from the two questionnaires were merged.
so that only teachers whose principals participated in survey and principals whose teachers participated in the survey were included in the merged data.

Table 7

Description of Research Question 3 Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher input is important in determining professional development activities.</td>
<td>1 = Never Important, 2 = , 3 = , 4 = , 5 = Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the last month how often did you build professional community among faculty and other staff?</td>
<td>1 = Never, 2 = Once or twice a month, 3 = Once or twice a week, 4 = Every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null Hypothesis

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers and principals are more likely to have healthy relationships.

The third research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals
whether the three groups—public, charter, and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals and teachers provide supportive leadership separately. Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

**Research Question 4**

Are teachers more likely to be satisfied with their work depending on whether they work in a public, charter, or private religious school?

Variables of teacher satisfaction measured by the SASS 1999-2000 teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 8.

**Null Hypothesis**

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which the teachers are satisfied.

The fourth research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals
Table 8

Description of Research Question 4 Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my teaching salary.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher?</td>
<td>1 = Certainly would become a teacher, 2 = Probably would become a teacher, 3 = Chances are about even for and against, 4 = Probably would not become a teacher, 5 = Certainly would not become a teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

whether the three groups—public, charter, and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable
has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

*Research Question 5*

Is the frequency of student behavior problems, as reported by teachers, more likely to be lower in public, charter, or private religious schools?

Variables of student behavior problems measured by the SASS 1999-2000 teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 9.

*Null Hypotheses*

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which student behavior problems are reported to be a problem by teachers.

The fifth research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether the three groups—public, charter, and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables
Table 9

Description of Research Question 5 Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The amount of student tardiness and class cutting in this school interferes with my teaching.</td>
<td>1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is physical conflicts among students a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is vandalism of school property a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student disrespect for teachers a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is students dropping out of school a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student apathy a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.
Research Question 6

Is the frequency of student behavior problems, as reported by principals, more likely to be lower in public, charter, or private religious schools?

Variables of student behavior problems measured by the SASS 1999-2000 principal questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 10.

Table 10

Description of Research Question 6 Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student tardiness a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student class cutting a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is physical conflicts among students a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student disrespect for teachers a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is students dropping out of school a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is student apathy a problem in this school?</td>
<td>1 = Serious Problem, 2 = Moderate Problem, 3 = Minor Problem, 4 = Not a Problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Null Hypotheses

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which student behavior problems are reported to be a problem by principals.

The sixth research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether the three groups—public, charter, and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

Research Question 7

Are teachers more likely to have power to control decisions that impact their ability to teach in public, charter, or private religious schools?
Variables of teacher control over decisions that impact their ability to teach measured by the SASS 1999-2000 teacher questionnaire data are listed and described in Table 11.

Table 11

*Description of Research Question 7 Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to select textbooks and other instructional materials.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to select content, topics and skills to be taught.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to select teaching techniques.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers control student evaluations and grading.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to discipline students.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to determine the amount of homework to be assigned.</td>
<td>Choose a number on a scale from 1-5 where 1 means “No Control” and 5 means “Complete Control”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Null Hypotheses

There is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers have control over decisions that impact their ability to teach.

The seventh research question was analyzed using discriminant function analysis. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether the three groups—public, charter, and private religious schools—could be reliably distinguished along certain dimensions. For this analysis, the discriminant analysis will inquire into whether the three groups can be distinguished along linear combinations of the items on the extent to which principals provide supportive leadership.

Discriminant function analysis is a parsimonious method. MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) and discriminant function analysis are essentially the same. MANOVAs tend to ask whether the three groups are different on a linear combination of various variables, while discriminant function analyses tend to ask whether the variables could form reliable dimensions to distinguish the three groups. Since the group variable has three levels, there will be a maximum of two dimensions that could distinguish the three groups.

Summary of the Methodology

The study investigated the association school choice has with school climate by looking at whether the three groups could be distinguished on seven characteristics of school climate. The study research questions inquired into the association between each
climate characteristic and school choice. Item responses from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher and principal questionnaires were selected as indicators for each school climate characteristics. Discriminant function analysis was used to inquire whether public schools, charter schools, and private religious schools could then be distinguished along linear combinations of the selected items for each climate characteristic. Discriminant function analysis is a multivariate technique that parsimoniously reveals whether a given number of independent variables can be distinguished along linear combinations of selected dependent variables. If the discriminant function analysis indicated there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups, multiple comparisons were conducted to determine which groups differed from each other. The following chapter reports the results of each research question as they compare school climate in public, charter, and private religious schools.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study investigated the association school choice has with school climate. The researcher conducted discriminant function analyses to determine whether there were climate differences among private religious, public, and charter schools. An alpha of .05 was used with all inferential procedures in this study, as is customary for behavioral science (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998). In order to have relatively simple discriminant functions, only the absolute value of correlation coefficients greater than 0.35 (Hinkle et al., 1998; Hsieh, 2000) are included in the interpretation. Using discriminant analyses, the researcher asked whether seven selected characteristics of school climate, each measured by a set of items on the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey, could be used to discriminate between the three school groups. This chapter reports the results of the relationship between seven school climate characteristics and school choice: (1) the relationship between supportive principal leadership and school choice, (2) the relationship between teacher collegiality and school choice, (3) the relationship between teacher/principal relations and school choice, (4) the relationship between teacher satisfaction and school choice, (5) the relationship between the frequency of student problems reported by principals and school choice, (6) the relationship between the frequency of student problems reported by teachers and school...
choice, and (7) the relationship between teachers’ power to control relevant decisions and school choice.

**Research Question 1 Results**

Can principals in private religious, public, or charter schools be reliably discriminated based on the level of supportive leadership provided by the principal?

In order to test whether supportive leadership differs among private religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher questionnaire were the descriptive variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,587 teachers from private religious schools, 42,086 teachers from public schools, and 2,847 teachers from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant function analysis on supportive leadership is displayed in Table 5. The results of the discriminant function analysis on supportive principal leadership are reported in Table 12. The discriminant function determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in supportive leadership.

There were two significant discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on supportive leadership. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers receive supportive leadership is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (12, N = 46,520) = 718.26, p < .001, R_c = .11$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that
Table 12

Discriminant Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers in Their Level of Leadership Support
(Research Question 1: Principal Supportive Leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td>F, p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates Expectations</td>
<td>1.58, 0.763</td>
<td>1.71, 0.806</td>
<td>1.71, 0.854</td>
<td>19.65***, 0.24, 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>1.54, 0.805</td>
<td>1.88, 0.924</td>
<td>1.74, 0.919</td>
<td>129.45***, 0.69, -0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Enforces Discipline</td>
<td>1.53, 0.789</td>
<td>1.79, 0.894</td>
<td>1.74, 0.913</td>
<td>71.37***, 0.51, 0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Discusses Practices</td>
<td>2.53, 0.973</td>
<td>2.7, 0.945</td>
<td>2.54, 0.992</td>
<td>63.70***, 0.43, -0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides Adequate Materials</td>
<td>1.53, 0.752</td>
<td>1.93, 0.919</td>
<td>1.96, 0.946</td>
<td>151.20***, 0.64, 0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Recognized</td>
<td>1.86, 0.848</td>
<td>2.22, 0.925</td>
<td>2.03, 0.941</td>
<td>162.52***, 0.77, -0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Centroids

| Private Religious Schools | -0.52 | -0.15 |
| Public Schools            | 0.03  | -0.01 |
| Charter Schools           | -0.16 | 0.23  |

Eigenvalue

| 0.01 | 0.004 |

Canonical Correlation

| 0.11 | 0.06  |

*** p < .001
this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on the variables of administrator support and encouragement, principal discipline enforcement, principal instructional practice discussions, and principal recognition of staff. Teachers in public schools reported lower levels of support and encouragement ($M = 1.88$) from their principal than teachers in private religious ($M = 1.54$) and charter schools ($M = 1.74$). Teachers in public schools were less likely to report that their principal enforced school rules and backed them up ($M = 1.79$) than their counterparts in private religious ($M = 1.53$) and charter schools ($M = 1.74$). Teachers in public schools reported their principal talked with them about instructional practices ($M = 2.70$) less frequently than teachers in private religious ($M = 2.53$) and charter schools ($M = 2.54$) did. Teachers in public schools were less likely to report that staff was recognized for a job well done ($M = 2.22$) than teachers in private religious ($M = 1.86$) and charter schools ($M = 2.03$).

For function 2, $X^2 (5, N = 46,520) = 185.88, p < .001, R_c = .06$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious and public schools on the variable of the staff being provided with necessary materials. Teachers in charter schools were less likely to report that necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies and copy machines were available as needed ($M = 1.96$) than teachers in private religious ($M = 1.53$) and public schools ($M = 1.93$).

Item to function correlations and an examination of means also indicate that teachers in private religious schools are more likely to report that their principal
communicated what was expected of them \( (M = 1.58) \) than teachers in public \( (M = 1.71) \) and charter schools \( (M = 1.71) \).

The findings of the research question 1 discriminant function analysis are summarized as follows:

- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to be supported and encouraged by their principal than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to be backed up by their principal enforcing the rules than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to discuss instructional practices with their principal than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to be recognized for a job well done than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in private religious and public schools are more likely to have necessary materials and supplies than teachers in charter schools.
- Teachers in private religious schools are more likely to have their principal communicate what is expected of them than teachers in charter and public schools.

In general, these findings indicate that teachers in private religious schools receive a greater level of supportive leadership than teachers in charter and public schools. Further, teachers in charter schools report more supportive leadership than their counterparts in public schools on 4 out of 6 variables, while teachers in public schools report more supportive leadership than teachers in charter schools on 1 out of 6 variables.
Research Question 2 Results

Can teachers in private religious, public, or charter schools be discriminated based on the level of teacher collegiality?

In order to test whether teacher collegiality differs among private religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher questionnaire were the variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,587 teachers from private religious schools, 42,086 teachers from public schools, and 2,847 teachers from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant function analysis on teacher collegiality is displayed in Table 6. The results of the discriminant function analysis on teacher collegiality are reported in Table 13. The discriminant function determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in teacher collegiality.

There were two significant discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on teachers' level of collegiality. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers are collegial is rejected. For function 1, \( X^2 (6, N = 46,520) = 740.80, \ p < .001, \ R_c = .12 \). An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on the variables of cooperative effort and coordination of course content. Teachers in public schools \((M = 1.98)\) are less likely to report a great deal of cooperative effort among colleagues than teachers in private
Table 13

Discriminant Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers in Their Level of Collegiality  
(Research Question 2: Teacher Collegiality)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate F</th>
<th>Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Function 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Collaboration on Instruction</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Cooperation</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Coordinates Content</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Group Centroids                       |                   |           |           |              |              |              |
| Private Religious Schools             | -0.55             | 0.09      |           |              |              |              |
| Public Schools                        | 0.04              | 0.003     |           |              |              |              |
| Charter Schools                       | -0.25             | -0.1      |           |              |              |              |

| Eigenvalue                            | 0.02              | 0.001     |           |              |              |              |
| Canonical Correlation                 | 0.12              | 0.03      |           |              |              |              |

*** p < .001
religious schools ($M = 1.55$) or teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.73$). Teachers in public schools ($M = 1.90$) are less likely to coordinate the content of their courses with that of other teachers than teachers in private religious ($M = 1.73$) and charter schools ($M = 1.83$).

For function 2, $X^2 (2, N = 46,520) = 39.43, p < .001, R_c = .03$. An examination of group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function further separated charter schools from private religious and public schools on the variable of regular collaboration. Teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.29$) reported collaborating regularly with other teachers on issues of instruction more in the last year than teachers in private religious ($M = 1.39$) and public schools ($M = 1.30$).

The findings of the research question 2 discriminant function analyses are summarized as follows:

- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to cooperate with colleagues than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in private religious and charter schools are more likely to coordinate the content of their courses with colleagues than teachers in public schools.
- Teachers in charter schools are more likely to collaborate with other teachers than teachers in private religious and public schools.

In general, these findings indicate there is a greater level of teacher collegiality in private religious schools and charter schools than in public schools. The comparison of teacher collegiality in charter schools versus private religious schools is mixed and depends on the
item measured. The findings indicate that there is a greater level of teacher collegiality in
private religious schools over more items.

Research Question 3 Results

Can teachers and principals in private religious, public, and charter schools be
discriminated based on the level of their relationship with each other?

In order to test whether teacher-principal relationships differ among private
religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was used. The research
question was tested from the perspective of principals. Related items from the 1999-2000
SASS principal questionnaire were the variables and the groups were the three types of
schools. The sample included 1,515 teachers and principals from private religious schools,
39,214 teachers and principals from public schools, and 2,646 teachers and principals from
charter schools. A description of the variables for discriminant function analysis on teacher-
principal relationships is displayed in Table 7. The results of the discriminant function
analysis are reported in Table 14. The discriminant function determined whether there were
differences among the three types of schools in teacher-principal relationships.

There were two significant functions that distinguished between the three groups—
private religious, public, and charter schools—on the level of their teacher-principal
relationships. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function
that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers and principals
have healthy relationships is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (8, N = 43,372) = 1,107.56,
p < .001, R_c = .15$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations
Table 14

**Discriminant Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers and Principals in Their Level of Relationship**
(Research Question 3: Teacher-Principal Relationship)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate F</th>
<th>Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Input on Prof. Development</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>165.47***</td>
<td>-0.53, 0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Prof. Community Frequency</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>37.20***</td>
<td>-0.14, 0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues Share Beliefs</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>367.66***</td>
<td>0.84, 0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Shares Kind of School</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>90.67***</td>
<td>0.43, 0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group Centroids**

| Private Religious Schools            | -0.64             | -0.17  |
| Public Schools                       | 0.05              | -0.01  |
| Charter Schools                      | -0.33             | 0.17   |

**Eigenvalue**

| Canonical Correlation                | 0.02              | 0.003  |

---

*** $p<.001$
indicated that this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on the variables of teacher input in determining professional development activities, colleagues sharing beliefs about the mission of the school, and principals communicating the kind of school he/she wants to the staff. Principals in public schools ($M = 3.82$) report less teacher input in determining professional development activities than principals in charter schools ($M = 4.10$) and principals in private religious schools ($M = 4.06$). Teachers in public schools ($M = 1.91$) are less likely to agree that they work with colleagues that share their beliefs about the central mission of the school they work in than teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.73$) and teachers in private religious schools ($M = 1.42$). Teachers in public schools ($M = 1.81$) are also less likely to agree that their principal communicated the kind of school he/she wants to the staff than teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.67$) and teachers in private religious schools ($M = 1.54$).

For function 2, $X^2 (3, N = 43,372) = 119.03$, $p < .001$, $R_c = .05$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious schools on the variables of teacher input in determining professional development activities and colleagues sharing beliefs about the mission of the school. The function separated charter schools from private religious and public schools on the variable of the frequency of principal-led community building among the school staff. Principals in charter schools ($M = 4.10$) report more teacher input in determining professional development activities than teachers in private religious schools ($M = 4.06$). Teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.73$) are less likely to agree that they work with colleagues that share their beliefs about the central mission of the school
they work in than teachers in private religious schools ($M = 1.42$). Principals in charter schools ($M = 3.15$) report building professional community among the faculty and staff more often than principals in private religious schools ($M = 2.99$) and public schools ($M = 3.00$).

The findings of the research question 3 discriminant function analyses are summarized as follows:

- Teachers in public schools have less input in determining professional development activities than teachers in charter and private religious schools.
- Teachers in public schools are less likely to work with colleagues that share their beliefs about the central mission of the school than teachers in charter and private religious schools.
- Principals in public schools are less likely to communicate the kind of school they want with the faculty and staff than principals in charter and private religious schools.
- Teachers in charter schools have more input in determining professional development activities than teachers in private religious schools.
- Teachers in charter schools are less likely to agree that they work with colleagues that share their beliefs about the central mission of the school they work in than teachers in private religious schools.
- Principals in charter schools build professional community with the faculty and staff more often than principals in private religious and charter schools.
Principals in private religious schools are more likely to communicate the kind of school they want with the faculty than principals in charter schools. In general, these findings indicate that the level of teacher-principal relationships is lower in public schools than in private religious and charter schools. The comparison of teacher-principal relationships in charter schools versus private religious schools is mixed depending on the item measured. The findings indicate that teacher-principal relationships are healthier in private religious schools over more items.

Research Question 4 Results

Can teachers in a private religious, public, or charter school be reliably discriminated based on their levels of satisfaction?

In order to test whether teacher satisfaction differs among private religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher questionnaire were the predictive variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,587 teachers from private religious schools, 42,086 teachers from public schools and 2,847 teachers from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant analysis on teacher satisfaction is displayed in Table 8. The results of the discriminant function analysis on teacher satisfaction are reported in Table 15. The discriminant function analysis determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in teacher satisfaction. There were two significant discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on teachers’ level of
Table 15

Discriminant Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers in Their Level of Satisfaction
(Research Question 4: Teacher Satisfaction)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Satisfaction</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction With Teaching at School</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose Teaching Again</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Centroids

| Private Religious Schools       | -0.31   | -0.29 |
| Public Schools                  | 0.03    | -0.001|
| Charter Schools                 | -0.27   | 0.17  |

Eigenvalue

| Private Religious | 0.009 |
| Public Schools    | 0.004 |
| Charter Schools   | 0.09  |

Canonical Correlation

| Private Religious | 0.06  |
| Public Schools    | 0.08  |
| Charter Schools   | 0.17  |

*** p < .001
satisfaction. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which teachers are satisfied is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (8, N = 46,520) = 624.771, p < .001, R_c = .09$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on the variables of salary satisfaction and choosing teaching as a career if starting over.

Teachers in public schools expressed less satisfaction ($M = 1.62$) with their salary than their counterparts in private religious schools ($M = 1.32$). (Note: The group centroids indicate that teachers in public schools should be less satisfied with their salary than teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.67$) but the means do not separate the two groups. This anomaly negates this particular conclusion.) Teachers in public schools were less likely to choose a career in teaching if they could start over in college ($M = 2.19$) than either teachers in private religious schools ($M = 1.73$) and teachers in charter schools ($M = 1.92$).

For function 2, $X^2 (3, N = 46,520) = 209.78, p < .001, R_c = .06$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious schools and public schools on one variable, satisfaction with teaching at the current school. Teachers in charter schools ($M = 2.70$) are more likely to be satisfied with their current teaching situation than teachers in public schools ($M = 2.93$) and private religious schools ($M = 2.81$).

The findings of the research question 4 discriminant function analysis are summarized as follows:
Teachers in private religious schools are more satisfied with their salary than teachers in public schools.

Teachers in private religious schools are more likely to choose teaching again in college than teachers in public schools and charter schools.

Teachers in charter schools are more likely to be satisfied with teaching in their current school than teachers in public schools and private religious schools.

In general, these findings indicate that teachers in private religious schools and charter schools are more satisfied with their work than teachers in public schools. The findings also indicate that, while teachers in charter schools are more satisfied with teaching in their current school than teachers in public and private religious schools, there is not a general, significant difference between public and charter school teachers in how satisfied they are with their work.

Research Question 5 Results

Can teachers in private religious, public, or charter schools be reliably discriminated based on the levels of student behavior problems they report?

In order to test whether student behavior problems as reported by teachers differ among private religious, public and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher questionnaire were the predictive variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,587 teachers from private religious schools, 42,086 teachers from public schools, and
2,847 teachers from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant analysis on student behavior problems as reported by teachers is displayed in Table 9. The results of the discriminant function analysis on student behavior problems reported by teachers are reported in Table 16. The discriminant function analysis determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in student behavior problems reported by teachers.

There were two significant discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on teachers’ level of reported student behavior problems. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which there are student problems reported by teachers is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (12, N = 46,520) = 2422.30, p < .001, R_e = .22$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on five student problem variables: physical conflicts, vandalism, disrespect for teachers, dropouts, and student apathy. Teachers in public schools ($M = 3.03$) reported that physical conflict is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious ($M = 3.64$) and charter schools ($M = 3.19$) reported it to be. Teachers in public schools ($M = 3.12$) reported that vandalism is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious ($M = 3.67$) and charter schools ($M = 3.34$) reported it to be. Teachers in public schools ($M = 3.25$) reported that student disrespect for teachers is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious ($M = 2.45$) and charter schools ($M = 2.66$) reported it to be. Teachers
Table 16

Discriminant Function Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers in Their Level of Student Behavior Problems
(Research Question 5: Student Behavior Problems Reported by Teachers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate</th>
<th>Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Tardiness</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Conflicts</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect for Teachers</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Apathy</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Centroids

| Private Religious Schools | 1.07 | 0.14 |
| Public Schools            | -0.06| 0.01 |
| Charter Schools           | 0.33 | -0.23|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Canonical Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001
in public schools ($M = 3.11$) reported that student dropouts are a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious ($M = 3.89$) and charter schools ($M = 3.40$) reported it to be. Teachers in public schools ($M = 2.32$) reported that student apathy is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious ($M = 3.25$) and charter schools ($M = 2.68$) reported it to be. The function also indicated that teachers in public schools ($M = 2.91$) reported that tardiness is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious schools ($M = 3.49$) reported it to be.

For function 2, $X^2 (5, N = 46,520) = 182.70, p < .001, R_c = .06$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious schools on the variable, student tardiness. Teachers in charter schools ($M = 2.89$) reported that tardiness is a greater problem in their schools than teachers in private religious schools ($M = 3.49$) reported it to be.

A final careful examination of group means item by item indicates that on five student problem variables—physical conflicts, vandalism, disrespect for teachers, dropouts, and student apathy—teachers in charter schools reported greater problems than teachers in private religious schools.

The findings of the research question 5 discriminant function analysis are summarized as follows:

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that physical conflict is a problem than teachers in charter schools, and teachers in charter
schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that vandalism is a problem than teachers in charter schools, and teachers in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that disrespect for teachers is a problem than teachers in charter schools, and teachers in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that dropouts are a problem than teachers in charter schools, and teachers in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that student apathy is a problem than teachers in charter schools, and teachers in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in private religious schools are less likely to report that tardiness is a problem than teachers in public schools and charter schools.

In general, these findings indicate that teachers in private religious schools report fewer student problems than teachers in public and charter schools. A close examination of the means also indicates that in general teachers in charter schools report fewer student problems than teachers in public schools.
Research Question 6 Results

Can principals in private religious, public, or charter schools be reliably discriminated based on the levels of student behavior problems they report?

In order to test whether student behavior problems as reported by principals differ among private religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant function analysis was conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS principal questionnaire were the predictive variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,713 principals from private religious schools, 8,524 principals from public schools, and 891 principals from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant analysis on student behavior problems as reported by principals is displayed in Table 10. The results of the discriminant function analysis on student behavior problems reported by principals are reported in Table 17. The discriminant function analysis determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in student behavior problems reported by principals.

There were two significant discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on principals’ level of reported student behavior problems. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the extent to which there are student problems reported by principals is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (12, N = 11,128) = 1519.83, p < .001, R_c = .34$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated public
Table 17

Discriminant Function Analysis of Three Groups of Principals in Their Level of Student Behavior Problems
(Research Question 6: Student Behavior Problems Reported by Principals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate</th>
<th>Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Tardiness</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Cutting</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Conflicts</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect for Teachers</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Apathy</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Centroids</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Religious Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<.001
schools from private religious and charter schools on five student problem variables: class cutting, physical conflicts, disrespect for teachers, dropouts, and student apathy. Principals in public schools ($M = 3.43$) reported that class cutting is a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious ($M = 3.89$) and charter schools ($M = 3.65$) reported it to be. Principals in public schools ($M = 3.10$) reported that physical conflict is a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious ($M = 3.56$) and charter schools ($M = 3.33$) reported it to be. Principals in public schools ($M = 2.95$) reported that student disrespect for teachers is a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious ($M = 3.39$) and charter schools ($M = 3.11$) reported it to be. Principals in public schools ($M = 3.35$) reported that student dropouts are a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious ($M = 3.89$) and charter schools ($M = 3.49$) reported it to be. Principals in public schools ($M = 2.81$) reported that student apathy is a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious ($M = 3.34$) and charter schools ($M = 3.13$) reported it to be. The function also indicated that principals in public schools ($M = 2.70$) reported that tardiness is a greater problem in their schools than principals in private religious schools ($M = 3.05$) reported it to be.

For function 2, $X^2 (5, N = 46,520) = 158.93$, $p < .001$, $R_c = .20$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious schools on the variable, student tardiness. Principals in charter schools ($M = 2.61$) reported that tardiness is a greater
problem in their schools than teachers in private religious schools ($M = 3.05$) reported it to be.

A final careful examination of group means item by item indicates that on five student problem variables—class cutting, physical conflicts, disrespect for teachers, dropouts, and student apathy—teachers in charter schools reported greater problems than teachers in private religious schools.

The findings of the research question 6 discriminant function analysis are summarized as follows:

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that class cutting is a problem than principals in charter schools, and principals in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than principals in public schools.

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that physical conflict is a problem than principals charter schools, and principals in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than principals in public schools.

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that disrespect for teachers is a problem than principals in charter schools, and principals in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than principals in public schools.

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that dropouts are a problem than principals in charter schools, and principals in charter
schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than principals in public schools.

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that student apathy is a problem than principals in charter schools, and principals in charter schools are less likely to report that it is a problem than principals in public schools.

- Principals in private religious schools are less likely to report that tardiness is a problem than principals in public schools and charter schools.

In general, these findings indicate that principals in private religious schools report fewer student problems than principals in public and charter schools. A close examination of the means also indicates that, in general, principals in charter schools report fewer student problems than principals in public schools, but the difference is not as great.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the findings for this research question closely mirror the findings for research question 5. Teachers and principals generally have the same perceptions about student problems.

Research Question 7 Results

Can teachers in private religious, public, or charter schools be reliably discriminated based on the level of power they have to control decisions that impact their ability to teach?

In order to test whether teacher control over decisions that impact teaching differs among private religious, public, and charter schools, discriminant analysis was
conducted. Related items from the 1999-2000 SASS teacher questionnaire were the predictive variables and the groups were the three types of schools. The sample included 1,587 teachers from private religious schools, 42,086 teachers from public schools, and 2,847 teachers from charter schools. A description of variables for discriminant analysis on teacher decision-making power is displayed in Table 11. The results of the discriminant analysis on teacher decision-making power are reported in Table 18. The discriminant function analysis determined whether there were differences among the three types of schools in the level of power teachers have to control decisions that impact their classrooms.

There were two discriminant functions that distinguished between the three groups—private religious, public, and charter schools—on teachers' level of power to control decisions that impact their classrooms. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no reliable discriminant function that can separate the three types of schools in the level of teacher power to control decisions is rejected. For function 1, $X^2 (12, N = 46,520) = 555.98, p < .001, R_c = .10$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated public schools from private religious and charter schools on the variables of teacher control selecting content and teacher control of discipline. Teachers in public schools reported less control of selecting materials ($M = 3.71$) than their counterparts in private religious ($M = 3.92$) and charter schools ($M = 3.87$). Teachers in public schools also reported less control of classroom discipline ($M = 3.93$) than teachers in private religious ($M = 4.30$) and charter schools ($M = 4.06$).
Table 18

**Discriminant Analysis of Three Groups of Teachers in Their Level of Autonomy**  
*(Research Question 7: Teacher Power to Control Decisions)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Univariate Item to Function Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Religious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Selecting Materials</strong></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Selecting Content</strong></td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Selecting Technique</strong></td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Evaluating Students</strong></td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Control-Homework</strong></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Centroids</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Religious Schools</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Schools</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eigenvalue</strong></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canonical Correlation</strong></td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001
For function 2, $X^2(5, N = 46,520) = 63.15, p < .001, R_c = .04$. An examination of the group centroids and item to function correlations indicated that this function separated charter schools from private religious and public schools on the variables of teacher control of teaching techniques, teacher control of homework, and teacher control of student evaluation. Teachers in charter schools reported less control over teaching techniques ($M = 4.41$) than their counterparts in private religious ($M = 4.54$) and public schools ($M = 4.42$). Teachers in charter schools reported less control over homework ($M = 4.38$) than teachers in private religious ($M = 4.50$) and charter schools ($M = 4.51$). Teachers in charter schools reported less control over student evaluation ($M = 4.47$) than teachers in private religious ($M = 4.57$) and public schools ($M = 4.49$). Neither discriminant function clearly separated teachers in the three types of school on the variable of control over selecting materials.

The findings of the research question 7 discriminant function analysis are summarized as follows:

- Teachers in charter and private religious schools have more control over the selection of content, topics, and skills to be taught than teachers in public schools.

- Teachers in charter and private religious schools have more control over discipline than teachers in public schools. Teachers in private religious schools have more control over discipline than teachers in charter schools.

- Teachers in private religious and public schools have more control over what teaching techniques they use than teachers in charter schools.
• Teachers in private religious and public schools have more control over the amount of homework assigned than teachers in charter schools.

• Teachers in private religious and public schools have more control over student evaluation than teachers in charter schools.

In general, these findings indicate that teachers in private religious schools have more power to control decisions that impact their ability to teach than teachers in public and charter schools. The findings also indicate that there are differences between public and charter school teachers in this climate characteristic, but these differences are not consistent. Charter school teachers have more control over the selection of content, topics, and skills taught and teaching techniques used, whereas public school teachers have more control over the amount of homework assigned and student evaluation.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Review of Study

School climate is a factor of school improvement and school quality. Researchers characterize the climate in excellent schools as open and healthy. They characterize the climate in poor schools as closed and unhealthy. The purpose of this study was to examine the association between school choice and school climate. Specifically, this study asked, “Does school climate in private religious, charter, and public schools differ?” Climate was understood to be the basic patterns of behavior dominant in a school. Climate has been the subject of much research. Researchers have identified a number of common characteristics that can be used to measure school climate. The characteristics used in this study include:

- The amount of supportive leadership provided by the principal
- The amount of collegiality among teachers
- The health of the relationships teachers and principals have with each other
- The degree of satisfaction teachers have with their work
- The frequency of student behavior problems
- The amount of power teachers have to influence decisions that impact their ability to teach.
The study used data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey given by the National Center for Educational Statistics to measure each climate characteristic in private religious, charter, and public schools. The study is intended to add to the national debate about the appropriateness and effectiveness of using choice as school improvement policy. The results of this study provide school leaders and policymakers with direct knowledge of the association between choice and climate.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study generally affirm the association of choice with school climate, while at the same time highlighting some of the concerns policymakers must consider when using choice to improve schools. Table 19 summarizes the group comparisons found in the study.

First, the findings of the study clearly show that school climate is more open and healthy in private religious schools than it is in public schools. The difference in climate is pronounced. Teachers report a greater level of supportive principal leadership in private religious schools than in public schools in five of the six measures used. Teachers report a greater level of collegiality in private religious schools than in public schools in two of the three measures used. Private religious school teachers report a stronger teacher-principal relationship than public school teachers in three of the four measures used. Teachers in private religious schools report a greater level of satisfaction with their job than teachers in public schools in two of the three measures used. Both teachers and principals in private religious schools report fewer student behavior problems than their
### Table 19

*Summary Table Group Comparisons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Climate Characteristic</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Supportive Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal lets staff know what is expected of them.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrator's behavior is supportive and encouraging.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal talks with teachers frequently about instructional practices.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Necessary materials and supplies to teach are available.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal backs teachers up and enforces the rules.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff members are recognized for jobs well done.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Collegiality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers collaborate regularly with other teachers about instruction.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a great deal of cooperation in the school.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers coordinate course content with other teachers.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Teacher-Principal Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher input is important in determining professional development.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal builds professional community among staff frequently.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Colleagues share beliefs and values about the central mission of the school.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal communicates kind of school he/she wants with the staff.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher is satisfied with their salary.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher is satisfied with being a teacher at current school.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher would choose to be a teacher again if starting in college again.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Climate Characteristic</th>
<th>Private Religious</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Student Behavior Problem—Teacher View</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which tardiness/class cutting is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which physical conflict is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which vandalism is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which disrespect is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which drop-outs are a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which apathy is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student Behavior Problems—Principal View</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which tardiness is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which cutting class is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which physical conflict is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which disrespect is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which drop-outs are a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent to which apathy is a problem.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are able to select textbooks and other instructional materials.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are able to select content topics and skills to be taught.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are able to select teaching techniques.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers control student evaluations.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are able to discipline students.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are able to determine the amount of homework.</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* = compares positively with —
— compares positively with —
There is no difference between groups with the same rating.
counterparts in public schools in all measures. Finally, private religious school teachers report greater autonomy than teachers in public schools in two of the six measures used. It is also important to note that teachers in public schools did not report having a more open and healthy climate than teachers in public schools in any of the 34 measures used in this study.

Second, the findings of the study show that school climate is more open and healthy in charter schools than it is in public schools. The difference between charter schools and public schools is significant but not as pronounced as the difference between private religious schools and charter schools. Teachers report a greater level of supportive principal leadership in charter schools than in public schools in four of the six measures used. Teachers in charter schools report a greater level of collegiality than teachers in public schools in all three measures used. Charter school teachers report a stronger teacher-principal relationship than public school teachers in all four measures used. Charter school teachers report a greater level of satisfaction with their job than public school teachers in one of the three measures used. Both teachers and principals in charter schools report fewer student behavior problems than their counterparts in five of six measures. It is also important to note that teachers in public schools do not report having a more open and healthy climate in any of the measures discussed so far. The comparison is different with the characteristic of teacher autonomy. The comparison is mixed. Teachers in public schools report greater autonomy than teachers in charter schools in three of six measures, teachers in charter schools report greater autonomy in two of the six measures, and the comparison is the same in one of the six measures.
Third, the findings show that school climate is more open and healthy in private religious schools than it is charter schools. The difference, however, is less pronounced than the other comparisons. The results are more mixed. Teachers report a greater level of supportive principal leadership in private religious schools than in charter schools in two of the six measures, whereas they report a greater level in charter schools than in private religious schools in one category. Teachers in private religious schools report a greater level of collegiality than teachers in charter schools in two of three measures, but teachers in charter schools report a greater level of collegiality in one measure. Private religious school teachers report a stronger teacher-principal relationship in two of four measures, whereas charter school teachers report a stronger teacher-principal relationship in the remaining two measures. Private religious school teachers report a greater level of satisfaction with their jobs in two of the three measures used, and charter school teachers report a greater level of job satisfaction in the other measure. The results are not mixed for student behavior. Both teachers and principals in private religious schools report fewer student problems than teachers and principals in charter in all six measures used. Finally, the comparison is again different with the characteristic of teacher autonomy. Teachers in charter schools report greater teacher autonomy in four of the measures, teachers in private religious schools report greater teacher autonomy in one measure, and the comparison is the same in one measure.
Discussion

The findings of this study clearly affirm the belief of choice advocates that school choice is associated with school climate. The climate of both private religious and charter schools is more open and healthy than the climate of public schools. Coupled with other research showing that an open and healthy school climate is an important factor in school improvement as measured by student achievement, this study affirms school choice as school reform policy. Choice proponents expect that forming charter schools will lead to innovative, accountable, more diverse, and efficient schools. This study shows that choice promotes an important piece of the groundwork, an open and healthy school climate, for these things to happen. This study also affirms the views of choice proponents who believe that allowing students to use public funds to attend private schools would give all students, but especially underprivileged students, access to schools with an open and healthy school climate and therefore schools that are more likely to improve and provide excellence. The findings of this study, then, support school choice as theory, practice, and policy.

The findings of this study have several additional implications for educators and politicians debating the merit of school choice as effective school reform policy. The study has implications for theorists, practitioners, and policymakers. First, it is important to realize the fact that the study, in showing that private religious and charter schools have more open school climates than public schools, has competing implications. Viewed from the perspective of the charter school and private religious school advocates, choice makes better schools available to children. In addition, choice is a catalyst for school
improvement in these schools. The implication is that choice leads to school improvement. Viewed from the perspective of the public school, however, choice does not necessarily lead to school improvement. It may just lead to flight and in doing so actually lead to decline for those left behind. Advocates point out that decline should just be the temporary result of competition and that decline eventually will force improvement. This study does not address this argument. This is an assumption that is still unproven. Future researchers will want to narrow the scope of the study to schools of choice and the matching public schools that lost students due to choice. This will be a much more detailed study. The SASS data used in this study did not exclude public schools that remained unaffected by choice. For example, rural schools often do not face competition from choice but were included. Until future studies are conducted, educators and politicians must continue to pursue policies that lead to improvement in existing public schools in addition to choice.

Second, this study points out that teacher autonomy may not be a clear-cut characteristic of an open and healthy school climate. While all other characteristics confirmed that charter schools have more open and healthy school climates than public schools, this study found teachers in public school to have more autonomy than teachers in charter schools. The implication is that theorists, practitioners, and policymakers must be careful using teacher autonomy as a mechanism promoted by choice to positively influence school improvement. Clearly, autonomy must be balanced by efficacy and accountability. The results of this study seem to imply that teacher autonomy is not clearly linked to a positive school climate. Indeed, educators and politicians should
consider ways to ensure that schools of choice have the autonomy necessary to be free to pursue improvements while at the same time being held accountable to improve. School leaders must also give teachers the freedom act on their own while at the same time promoting teacher efficacy.

Third, the findings of this study imply that school choice policy must be accompanied by additional policy that ensures that all parents have the ability to choose. It also implies that any successful choice policy will be accompanied by mechanisms that make sure parents are informed so they can all make wise choices for their children. This study affirms the basic fact that school choice is good policy only if parents are able to make good, well informed choices. The study does nothing to contradict the belief of school choice opponents that choice is nothing more than a way to further separate and segregate children. Future school choice policy must address this belief.

Finally, theorists, practitioners, and policymakers must ask themselves what the implications of the study findings comparing private religious schools and charter schools are. Why are private religious schools more open and healthy when both are the result of parent choice? One of the founding premises of school choice policy is that private schools historically offer an effective model that might be transferred to improve public schools. Choice is the way reformers see this transfer being made. The debate over school choice and chartering has been an outgrowth of analyses of private schools and their ability to serve their clients. To some extent, choice policy has been the result of a public perception that private schools promote higher student achievement and greater fiscal responsibility. Opponents of choice have always pointed out that private schools
have some built-in advantages that must be considered. Student socioeconomic status and parental support are two advantages that are often mentioned. This study intended to control the socioeconomic variable by looking only at private religious schools. These schools do require tuition but generally make every possible effort to serve all children from families that want spiritual development to be a main educational goal of their school. While the variable is not completely controlled, its effects are limited in this study. This study implies, then, that there are other variables that influence school climate and therefore school improvement. This could mean that policymakers will never really be able to offer parents the choice they want in a public setting, and vouchers or tax credits give policymakers the best chance to give parents what they want and to promote school improvement for all.

Summary

School choice continues to grow as a cornerstone of federal and state education policy aimed at school improvement. Charter schools, public schools of choice, and vouchers to attend private schools of choice are the means that policymakers use to make choice readily available to parents. Opponents of choice continue to assert that, while choice may be good for the families that can choose, it is not a policy that will improve America's schools in general. This study is important because it does show that school choice is associated with school climate and therefore is associated with school quality. As such, this study supports choice as school improvement policy. This support, however, is not given without caution. This study shows that private religious schools
have a more open and healthy climate than charter schools. Policymakers must pay attention to the implication that there are other important variables that lead to an open and healthy school climate than just choice. Policymakers must also understand that choice is effective as a public policy only if all parents have the ability to choose wisely. This study also serves as a warning that policymakers and researchers must continue to analyze the impact of choice on the public schools to which parents choose not to send their children.
REFERENCES


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