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LATINX PARENTS’ ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL CHOICE

By

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ABSTRACT

This pilot investigation studies the priorities, perceptions and tactics of Latinx and Hispanic parents in Miami-Dade County as they navigate the school choice marketplace through interviews with nine parents of school-aged children about their experiences regarding the school choice system. This research expands on work done by others to understand how minority groups in general and specifically Latinx and Hispanic families engage differently from white families. Even though solidly in the middle class, the parents relied on strong ties to family and close family friends to both gather information to choose a school and as a way to provide many of the traits they felt were part of a quality school such as community, small size, and help coping with transportation and scheduling challenges. Parents also sought out dual-language programs for both academic and cultural reasons but were often disappointed in the difficulty of accessing these limited programs. Additional themes found likely apply to families in other demographics as well. These include: not believing that the school choice system is truly impartial; frustration with the difficulty of accessing highly sought after public charter and magnet schools; and using private schools, especially in early education, to gain advantage in accessing prestigious public programs.
Latinx Parents’ Engagement in School Choice

In the past two decades, as school choice policies have become more common across the country, researchers have sought to explicate the many implications of the growing charter school sector. In the 2000-01 school year there were less than 2000 students enrolled in charter schools in the US. In the 2016-17 enrollment was just over 3 million (National Center for Education Statistics 2018). This massive growth has been politically charged the entire time. On one side, parent and teacher groups oppose the growth of charter schools, claiming they drain students and resources from public school, privatize public education and undermine accountability. Arrayed in opposition are other parent groups and education reform advocates who argue charter schools foster innovation in education and give parents a choice in their children’s education (Jason 2017).

The vast majority of research has focused on the academic performance of students in charter schools compared to those in “district” or traditional public schools. Using administrative data in states like Florida or districts like Washington, DC, scholars have sought to answer the critical questions of whether (or which) charter students outperform those in district schools, what types of charter schools perform better than others, and how much charter school competition has affected traditional public schools in the surrounding district (CREDO 2009; Harris and Larsen 2018; Sass 2006). Research of the students who apply to charter schools has shown that even those students who are not accepted and remain in public schools still do better academically (Gleason et al. 2010).

A critical issue for assessing charter school performance concerns “sorting mechanisms” or social influences on who is more likely to attend a charter school. Proper accounting for the selection of students into charter schools is imperative to being able to separate out the impact charter schools had on students versus the contributions of the family or neighborhood. For example, studies such as Harris' study of New Orleans or the CREDO national studies of charter schools attempt to match charter and non-charter students primarily on the basis of demographics and past-academic performance (CREDO 2009, 2013; Harris and Larsen 2018). Both these styles of research, virtual twin studies and lottery studies, essentially ignore how the values, resources and actions of the parents influence the school choice process, instead
they either control for it by finding virtual twins or essentially hold it constant by looking only at students whose parents entered them into a school choice lottery.

Another approach to understanding these sorting mechanisms is to study how parents engage with the school choice marketplace and make decisions about which schools to send their children (Lareau, Evans, and Yee 2016; Rich and Jennings 2015). Reformers argue that school choice benefits all schools due to the competitive pressure that choice puts on district schools to perform as well as charters. This assumes that parents will engage in school choice as rational consumers in the marketplace of school options for their children. Studies such as those by Lareau, Saporito, Goyette, and others show that decision-making about school options is much more driven by social relationships and status group preferences than by comparisons of school performance. This honors thesis examines how Latinx parents perceive and engage in the process of school choice in Miami-Dade, Florida.

Some of the research on how parents engage in school choice has focused on the racial dynamics of school choice, and much of this has concerned the relationship between school choice and the racial composition of public schools. A number of studies provide evidence that some of the recent rise in school racial segregation is due to the concurrent growth in charter schools, noting for example that charter school growth has been greatest in the most racially diverse districts (Renzulli and Evans 2005; Saporito 2003). Again, a crucial issue is how much the process of charter school recruitment and decision-making is shaped by how parents engage in the school choice process. In this case, research confirms that race and school racial composition can be as important as school performance (Goyette, Farrie, and Freely 2012; Saporito 2003). Minority parents' processes and priorities for choosing schools differ from those of white families for several reasons. These include racial/ethnic differences in the desirability of integrated schools (Saporito and Lareau 1999) and an information gap on school quality that disadvantages low-income minority families in the school choice marketplace (Rich and Jennings 2015; Saporito and Lareau 1999). A qualitative study of poor and working-class Black parents in Chicago revealed feelings of disempowerment and a lack of agency and control when engaging with the school choice system that might be shared with other low-income or marginalized families (Patillo 2015). A
limitation of this research is that much of it has focused on Black-white comparisons, on major urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest like Philadelphia, New York City, and Chicago or on broad contrasts between white versus minority students and parents.

Research on Latinx parents and students in charter schools is much more limited, despite their rapidly growing numbers in public schools and their concentration in large urban districts like Miami-Dade, Florida, or Houston, Texas. As such, it remains unclear how Latinx families view alternatives to traditional public schools, or even whether they are more or less likely to make use of charter schools than other ethnic groups. Very little research has specifically explored how Latinx parents navigate the systems of school choice they encounter. One study found that Latinx parents more heavily rely on close networks of friends and family than on district-supplied information when evaluating schools (Mavrogordato and Stein 2016). Another study of English language learners (ELLs), many of whom are Latinx, found that they are more likely to be enrolled in the school for which they are zoned, despite the fact that ELLs do better in charter schools on average (CREDO 2013). Research looking at views on discipline interviewed Black and Latinx parents with children enrolled in “no-excuses” and Montessori style schools found that both groups sought a balance between structure and independence in their children’s learning environment (Golann 2019). There is a clear need for additional research that examines how Latinx parents perceive their children's educational options in terms of district schools, charter schools, and private schools. Therefore, this honors thesis addresses the following research questions.

- What considerations do Latinx parents take into account when engaging in the school choice marketplace?
- What perception of the school choice marketplace do Latinx parents hold, how did they come to that perception, and how has it shaped their school choice process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2002 during President George W. Bush’s administration, the central idea behind school reform has been to improve student performance by making
school districts function more like businesses through testing-based accountability and parental choice. Even in 2015 during President Barack Obama’s administration, when the law was replaced with the updated Every Student Succeeds Act that focused more on closing achievement gaps of underserved students (USDE 2017), the underlying philosophy remained. Most current school reform attempts embrace the idea that schools should compete like businesses in a school choice marketplace, and that parents should act as consumers “purchasing” the education that is best for their children (Scott 2013). Florida has consistently been on the leading edge of school choice policy since Governor Jeb Bush’s A-Plus Accountability legislation established charter schools in the state (Greene 2001). Miami-Dade county, the location of interest in this research, has adopted policies towards robust school choice and has a wide variety of public and private school options, including public magnet programs and more charter schools than any other district in the state (NCES 2019).

Driven by such policy, the school option marketplace has grown tremendously, but there are multiple concerns about the degree to which it has improved the K-12 education system in Florida through competition and choice. Student performance in charter schools compared to neighborhood schools has shown limited and inconsistent improvements in achievement among charter school students (CREDO 2009, 2013; Gleason et al. 2010). School choice may contribute to resegregation of public schools along racial and economic lines as middle class and white parents have been shown to select schools that are less racially diverse and that are attended by students who come from families with higher socioeconomic status (Goyette et al. 2012; Saporito 2003; Saporito and Lareau 1999). The choice process itself may also be flawed as parents base their decisions on factors other than school performance such as racial preference shown by White parents and preferences to religious private schools for Black parents (Lareau et al. 2016).

Nonetheless, school choice in the form of both charter schools and private school scholarships are popular among racial/ethnic minority families. Indeed, there are some limited benefits for those families to choose charter schools over their neighborhood school. Stanford’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes found benefits for lower-income students of color (2013). A school choice lottery study by
Gleason et al found the same in terms of poverty generally but didn’t account for race. The study also found some of the reasons parents prefer charter schools: smaller class size, teachers with more autonomy, and longer school days to give flexibility in scheduling around work (Gleason et al. 2010).

Past studies of the process of school choice and parent perceptions of school quality have largely focused on large urban centers of the Northeast, particularly Philadelphia and Chicago (Rich and Jennings 2015; Saporito 2003; Saporito and Lareau 1999). Initially this literature focused on the connection between school choice and racial or economic segregation of schools by examining historical student data at the district level. These studies have shown general trends in enrollment and changes in enrollment in reaction to changes in district wide systems, such as Chicago Public Schools implementing new policies for their school grading systems and putting poor performing schools on “probation” (Rich and Jennings 2015). These studies all confirmed a tendency for white middle class families to flee schools with higher numbers of minority students and lower income students.

More recently, qualitative studies of school choice find more frustration and tension among even the most privileged parents as they seek to maximize their young children’s chances of success. White and Latinx families are more likely to rely on a personal network of contacts to gather information about the quality of schools compared to Black families (Lareau et al. 2016; Mavrogordato and Stein 2016). Latinx and Black families are less likely to rely on data from official sources, either high level information such as school grading systems or communicating with school personnel. They instead preferred word-of-mouth recommendations gathered from their personal networks (Lareau et al. 2016).

More recent research of parents in gentrifying neighborhoods by Bader et al. shows that racial considerations are more in the open among some advantaged white families - between whether parents should send their children to a private school or should they “invest” in their neighborhood public school to boost its performance and reputation. These discussions were nuanced, parents spoke of “quality” and “climate” as opposed to directly comparing demographic or even published school performance data (2019).
To contribute to this literature, I asked Latinx and Hispanic parents in a large metropolitan center in the Southeast (Miami) about their school choice process. Much of the existing research has been in the Northeast and has not examined Latinx and Hispanic families, despite their large numbers in charter schools and private schools in the U.S. What limited research there has been regarding Latinx and Hispanic families has been quantitative analysis of data for entire schools (Mavrogordato and Stein 2016) as opposed to a qualitative approach seeking to understand how parent’s perspectives of the system drive the trends in school choice within this community.

DATA AND METHOD

Research Design

I interviewed Latinx parents in Miami-Dade County, with children enrolled in traditional public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, and private schools. The interviews were structured to learn why parents made certain school choices and what perceptions they have of the education system that led them to those choices. As well as where these perceptions came from—family, friends, neighbors, church, media, schools, or the district. Existing research focuses on how parents make choices, but not on where they get their information or what those information sources are trying to communicate. The model of the school choice marketplace was useful here—in order to understand the racial/ethnic composition of charter schools, we need to attend to both the choices parents make as educational “consumers” and how charter schools market themselves to parent consumers, and whether those messages are reinforced or contradicted by the district.

Setting

Miami-Dade County is an ideal setting for this research for two reasons. First, it is a large school district with a robust school choice system. All public schools, except magnet schools which have academic requirements, are technically accessible by lottery, and while certain highly-sought-after schools have long waiting lists and very low odds for being accepted, there are theoretically minimal restrictions to accessing a charter school for those who know how to navigate the system. According to Miami-Dade County Public Schools, there are 392 public schools in the district of which 140 are charter
schools in 2019, the largest number among all Florida school districts. In addition, there are over 600 private schools (FDOE 2019).

Second, the county has a large Latinx population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, seventy percent of the district's students are Latinx or Hispanic. Florida Department of Education administrative data also show that Latinx students are over-represented in charter schools, as Hispanic students make up 85% of the students in Miami's charter schools according to the most recent data (NCES 2018). Latinx and Hispanic people are from a variety of cultural and country origins that share common cultural traits and are by no means ubiquitous. In Miami, 33.6% of people are Cuban, followed distantly by Columbinas (4.4%), Nicuarguans (4.4%), Peurto Ricans (3.7%), Honduran (2.4%), Dominican (2.3%), Mexican (1.8%), Venezuelan (1.8%), Peruvian (1.6%), and many other identities with smaller representation (Ruggles et al. 2020).

That charter schools enroll a larger percent of Latinx students than traditional public schools suggests there is some mechanism drawing those students there. Whether this trend is caused by culturally influenced behaviors on the part of parents or is influenced by how charter schools communicate and market themselves is not known. Research conducted in Indianapolis showed that Latinx parents there were more likely to rely on recommendations from friends and family (Mavrogordato and Stein 2016) but did not explore whether this made them more likely to choose school options besides traditional public schools.

Recruitment

I used word-of-mouth and direct online solicitations to recruit participants. In person recruiting used snowball sampling, beginning with a handful of contacts I knew personally and getting referrals to other parents who would like to be interviewed. I used convenience sampling to recruit parents through online communities on Facebook and other websites. These groups, of which quite a few exist, are online meeting places for parents. Some of the groups are based on specific neighborhoods or schools, some are based around cultural identity such as Latinx parents, and some are centered on particular parenting issues such as those for single parents or special needs kids. After reaching out to dozens of groups, four
responded and posted the information about the study. The majority, six of nine, parents were recruited from parenting groups.

Interviews were held by phone in January and February of 2020. 14 people completed the initial intake survey and nine of them completed an interview. The other five failed to respond to my contact attempts by phone, email and text. Informed consent was given in writing as part of the intake survey and was reiterated verbally before the interview. Appendix A is the screener survey including the informed consent agreement. Appendix B is the interview guide which includes the second confirmation of informed consent.

Each parent completed a digital survey hosted on FSU Qualtrics platform before the interview. This screener survey asked about demographic characteristics, income levels, cultural identity, children's ages, school(s) attended, and contact info. This allowed me to understand each family's circumstance and the schools attended before beginning the interview. I followed up with valid survey respondents by phone, email and text. I found that far more people responded to text messages than any other form of communication. Of the 13 initial survey responses, 10 responded and scheduled interviews. Nine of those completed their interviews and are included in this study.

Considering my research goals and the characteristics of the population under study, I used the below interview structure. The questions asked are included in the Appendix B interview guide.

- Understanding the reasoning and processes, beyond attending their zoned school, that the parents used to choose a school or schools for their children.
• Understanding parents’ views of their school options, including their views of charter schools in terms of academic quality, curriculum, fairness, safety, and accessibility.

• Understanding how and from where parents collected information to make these decisions such as websites, brochures, recommendations from friends or family, media and news, or communication with school officials.

I used semi-structured interviews with parents to gather the majority of the data for this study. Interviews were done by phone or teleconferencing software and recorded. Each interview took between 10 minutes and 25 minutes. Interviews were transcribed first using voice-to-text software and then reviewed and corrected by me. I used inductive coding, parsing the interview data as it was collected to identify emergent themes and concepts. These themes were used to inform later interviews, helping me seek out information reinforcing or contradicting those themes.

Sample

I interviewed nine parents of 13 school-aged children. All nine of the parents I interviewed were mothers. While a few mentioned the father having a say in the process, many did not. This suggests a strong correlation to gender roles where the mother has the primary responsibility for decision making related to childcare and early education, as found in other studies of parents engaged in school choice (Bader et al. 2019; 2016). This seems to be the case despite many of the participants indicating they worked full time and valued their careers.

Table 1. Respondents, school-age children, and where the children are enrolled as of interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent, Occupation, Parenting</th>
<th>Traditional public</th>
<th>Magnet public</th>
<th>Charter public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cara, Journalist, Coparenting</td>
<td>Age 4, grade preK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cassondra, Coparenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 8, grade 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daria,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 10, grade 5</td>
<td>Age 18, grade 11</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Eleven of the 13 students were of elementary age or younger. While this means parents of middle and high school students were not strongly represented, many of the parents expressed thought-out plans for their children's education up through high school. These plans included taking advantage of early education resources, tutoring and other outside assistance, leveraging personal networks to access decision makers, and one or more target schools with a trajectory for each student through middle and high school.

Only two of the interviewed parents reported they had a child who attended a public school in the Miami-Dade area, even though nothing in the recruitment process communicated a preference for parents who chose non-traditional school options. One attended an out-of-district public elementary school in pre-K, the second attended a magnet high school. Of the remaining children, seven attended private schools and four attended charter schools. Six of the nine families in this study had annual incomes of over $100,000 a year; two of those over $250,000. These income figures show that the sample is more economically prosperous than the typical family in Miami, where the median household income is closer to $50,000 (Census Bureau 2010). I also assume my sample of mothers is more engaged in their young
children’s lives than is true of many parents. The recruiting method used draws in parents who are highly engaged with their children's early education, who prioritize it as a critical part of their children's success, and who have the social capital to feel comfortable talking about it to a stranger on the phone. That means the study doesn’t necessarily speak to the experiences and perspectives of lower socio-economic families and those whose lives or choices make them less engaged and informed about early childhood education in Miami.

While all participants self identified as Latinx or Hispanic, the degree to which they identified as such surely varied. One imperfect indicator of this is accent. Some interviewees had stronger accents or minor language barriers while others had little or none. As a person who does not speak Spanish, I was initially concerned about possible language barriers, but in actually collecting data, language was never an issue beyond having to ask some participants to restate things that I may not have heard correctly or didn't understand. This suggests that the degree to which each parent identifies with Latinx culture and community varies. It also means that a key limitation of the study is that it does not capture the experiences of people who are recent immigrants or for other reasons speak less fluent English or do not speak it at all.

In any qualitative research, the bias of the researcher must be taken into account to understand how their research approach may affect their findings. The researcher of this project is a 37 year old single parent of two teenage children. The researcher is a white, assigned male at birth and identify as a non-binary and queer member of the LGBTQ+ community. Their interests focus heavily on the intersections of poverty and marginalized identities through interaction with existing social systems such as education, politics, health care, and media. They are critical of the current school choice system because it creates barriers to the marginalized people who would most benefit from improved educational choices. However they also see school choice as a valid option for people of color, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, neurodivergent people, and other marginalized groups who experience oppression within our conventional educational system.
RESULTS

In the interviews I asked parents first about their personal concerns and priorities in relation to their children's schooling. Then I asked them about the school choice system at large. This was necessary to give insight on how each parent placed themselves and their family in the context of the larger school choice marketplace. Here I will discuss my findings in the same way. First I will discuss the themes found in the parents’ concerns about their children's education. Then I will discuss parents' perceptions of the school choice marketplace and how they see themselves within it. Finally, I will describe three of the parents in a more detailed profile to show how these pieces come together in a complete narrative.

The Importance of Family Connections

Mavrogordato and Stein (2016) reported that Latinx parents in Indianapolis, IN, are more likely to utilize and consider more important personal networks of friends, family and community when making school choice decisions. My findings reinforce their finding, and it may reflect the cultural concept of “familism” or the primacy of family ties (Sabogal et al. 1987). Six of the parents said that friends or family with children in the same school was an important factor for them in deciding a school. Of those six, three parents said that they are alumni of the school their child currently attends or the school they would like their child to attend in their educational future. Thus, for Latinx parents engaged in school choice, the primary source of information and basis for selection is direct family connection to a school or the endorsement of a family member or close friend.

For one parent, Cassondra, the connection as a former student to the private school her children now attend meant that she had better access to the school for her children. “Some of the teachers that were there were also my teachers. So, I personally felt empowered to walk into the office and be like, hey, I have this situation or I have a question and it was a natural.” She saw her former teachers as extended family with whom she could communicate in a way that may have cut through some of the formalities common in a parent - teacher relationship.

Parents like Cassondra with family connections to a school were less likely to seek out information and consider a wide variety of schools compared to the parents who did not. While they
expressed other concerns besides family connections in choosing a school--good academics, a positive school community, and access to responsive teachers and staff, for example--they reported that they came to know whether a particular school provided those things through input from people they trusted in their network. Alternatively, they indicated that having family and friends in the school was a remedy to those concerns. In short, an interconnected community of teachers, parents, students and possibly even family members was the best way to handle typical educational issues such as transportation, accessibility and ensuring their children didn't go unsupported and unnurtured.

Logistics and Schedule

Even though higher income families were overrepresented in the sample, scheduling and transportation issues were primary concerns for most of the parents. Parents spoke of choosing the best school based on location; finding a well-regarded school that met their academic expectations but also was close to home or work so that their children's education would fit into their busy work and life schedule. While every parent talks about the importance of academics, ultimately parents make school choices that allow them to navigate busy work and family schedules, often choosing a less ideal school that better fits with their lives. Patti, one of the parents interviewed, explained the difficulties of including the transportation of their eight year old son to and from his charter school in her and her husband’s busy schedules. She brought this up early in the interview suggesting it was one of the more pressing concerns and one that greatly affects her choice of school. Patti works in the public school system and would prefer her son not attend a charter school, but constraints on scheduling and transportation limit her choices. Her husband, who lives on the other side of Miami and has a preference for charter or private schools, takes their son to school in the morning. Patti’s early work day makes it “impossible” for her to handle this responsibility. Their choice of school is made “for his ease in the morning,” not based on important factors such as ideological outlooks of the school system or curriculum. Patti and her husband would make different choices for their son is all else were equal, but Patti’s work schedule means that she has deferred to her husband out of necessity.
Class and School Size

Seven of the parents interviewed were concerned about class or school size, a common and desired way that charter schools and private schools differ from traditional public schools (Gleason et al. 2010; Renzulli, Parrott, and Beattie 2011). They directly related class size to the community focus and personal attention the school and individual teachers could afford them and their children. The difference between being one student in 15 rather than one in 20 was incredibly important to these parents. It meant the difference between their child just doing well and them thriving under the personal attention of a teacher working with ample time and resources alongside responsive support staff. Daria talked about concerns she had for her 10 year old son who attended public school before moving to the charter school he attends now. She felt his teacher, who was new and inexperienced, was ill prepared to teach the large class. She expressed distress that he “just got lost” in a class that size. She felt disempowered when she tried to address the issue with administrative staff who “didn't do anything about it to help the situation, because he was getting good enough grades and that was all that mattered.”

Parents of elementary age children, like Daria, saw personal attention with teachers as more important than academic achievement per se, more concerned about their child being lost to mediocrity in a crowd of other students at a large school than with their child doing better on tests, learning more, or getting straight As. Concerns over size were especially acute for parents considering the school options at the elementary school level. School size becomes less of a liability and more of a resource in middle school and high school where large schools are more common and often necessary for access to a range of specialized extracurricular programs. Concerns specifically about size were less common in previous studies of the school choice process among parents; in those studies, parents more often spoke of quality and the climate (2019), which arguably might be improved by smaller classes and schools. Parents who most emphasized school size often connected it to other benefits such as teachers’ ability to attend to all students (quality) and a sense of community (climate). This could be a concern specific to the Latinx and Hispanic community or it could be a concern specific to Florida, where reducing class size has been a political objective of education reformers since the late 1990s, including voters approving a class size
restriction amendment to the state constitution in 2002 (FDOE 2019). Nationally, concerns over school or classroom crowding have declined since the early 2000s and are not at the top of the list of what is considered the biggest problem in community schools (PDK Poll 2019).

**Dual Language Programs**

Miami-Dade has a massive Latinx population with 70 percent of students identifying as Latinx or Hispanic (NCES 2019). In addition, many of the families in the county have moved or lived in other countries, many in Spanish-speaking Central and South America. Now living in the US, some of the parents are interested in preserving a degree of their cultural roots through their children. Dual language programs, where English and another language are spoken daily, are very popular and in relatively short supply and therefore hard to get into in the Miami-Dade district. Six of the parents interviewed expressed interest in dual language programs but only one of them had a child enrolled in a school, and that was only possible by enrolling their child in a private school. Two parents had children who passed the language literacy testing to access magnet programs but did not get chosen in the lottery and had moved on with other choices, giving up on their children attending fully immersive dual language and instead relying on traditional foreign language classes at their final school. Two other parents have plans to place their young children in such a program at a later age. While the plans are thought out and well researched, they still hinge on a large degree to chance - the selection lottery. In some cases, the factors that shape the desirability of school are in conflict and parents must choose one over the other. Mia, a mother of two, had her younger son accepted into the dual language program at a magnet school but ultimately chose a charter school with a less immersive language program because of concerns about class size at the larger magnet school.

Cara, whose family had recently moved into the country, expressed surprise at how few dual-language instructional programs there were in the district. She explained she thought “Miami would have had more of a fair distribution of schools that offer Spanish immersion being that a lot of families here speak Spanish, it's probably the [US] city with the highest number of foreign born people.” It's clear these programs are sought after and highly desirable to certain parents, but like many other educational options
in the school choice marketplace, there is a scarcity that must be overcome by parents. Language immersion as a major factor determining school choice decisions is relatively unique to Latinx families, at least in this large multiethnic school district.

**Barriers to Access and Strategies to Overcome Them**

Many parents see the system as complicated, unnecessarily so, requiring them to jump through hoops, take tests, and show up for meetings scheduled without their consideration, just for a chance to be selected. They shared stories of countless school tours, dismissive staff, complicated application processes, and a general feeling of exhaustion and stress around the process. These reports are very consistent with the school choice experiences of white and black middle class families (Lareau et al. 2016).

What is apparent from the experiences of parents like Mia who was forced to choose between language immersion and school size, the school choice process is one of compromise. Many Latinx parents communicated that they have a clear idea of what they want for their children, maybe even a specific school, but logistical realities and the whims of the lottery program meant that most had to make concessions and simply try to do the best they can for their children. Many of the parents I talked to were frustrated by the process, both its complexity and the associated time demands. Parents like Helen, who struggled to find a pre-kindergarten program for her daughter, felt that the system was designed to make them jump through hoops, that they needed to prove to the schools that they, and their children, deserved to be there; not through just testing and grades but through an onerous amount of paperwork, as well as showing up to the school grounds and putting in time to get their children in.

Parents in this study relied on networks of other parents to understand and navigate the process, people who had some kind of inside knowledge of the process. This is a tactic that is common among white parents, and possibly less so for black parents, according to one study (Lareau et al. 2016). Most of the parents interviewed spoke about having people close to them who had children in the same schools they were trying to get into for their children. Some parents personally knew teachers and school staff as friends, family members of friends, or as professional acquaintances.
Most of the parents expressed doubts in whether the lottery system was truly random. Some suspected that there were exceptions made, many were completely convinced or had been told first hand by school staff they knew personally that the lottery is not random, that children get chosen first based on personal connections with parents and staff. Lareau et al. (2016) refer to this as a shadow system of informal rules for gaining access to schools of choice, such as bypassing formal district application procedures and going directly to the school principal. Many parents in my study suspected that such a system was in place in Miami, as well.

Given that the school choice process was one of compromise and also the suspicion that access to charters and magnets was susceptible to corruption, parents spent significant time and resources in giving their children as much of an advantage as possible. This included choosing the best PreK program, reading to them at home, hiring tutors, among other efforts to encourage early development, a process Lareau has identified as “concerted cultivation” (Lareau 2011). A common practice was to begin children in private early education programs that would give them an academic advantage against those who don’t have access to high quality pre-kindergarten programs. Five of the parents interviewed mentioned having their children enrolled in rigorous educational programs as young as three years old. By the time they were ready to enter elementary school, their children were already ahead of the curve and importantly had been tested for the district's gifted program. If there is preferential treatment going on in the school choice system like many parents suspect, investing these resources early would make their children more competitive in the quest for admission to a popular charter or magnet school.

The possibility that lottery exceptions are made in the case of academically talented applicants is confirmed by the example of Mia, the mother of a boy going into the second grade. Mia explained how she turned down a prestigious magnet program school to put her son into an equally prestigious charter school. According to Mia’s recollection, as she was driving back from enrolling her son in the magnet program, she felt uneasy about the magnet school’s class sizes. On the drive back from enrollment, she asked her husband to drive to and stop at the charter school they had applied to so he could inquire whether there was a chance their son could attend there instead. She explained what happened, “I guess
that exact day, a kid dropped from the second grade, which my son was gonna get in. And the amazing lady at the front, we know her. She was like do you have all the papers. And I was just coming from the other school so I did have copies of everything. I was like, yes, yes.” Later that same day, Mia received a call from the school, her son was accepted. She was fully aware of how much of a long shot it was to get in. It was “more than luck, I don't know. It was something that never happened,” she admitted.

Mia saying it was “more than luck” likely means she recognizes the benefits of the work and commitment she had put into her son's education. He had already been accepted to a magnet program, he had been tested as gifted, she knew a staff member, and came with all the paperwork necessary for enrollment. She had developed a number of advantages to secure her son access into a highly desirable school. She had invested years of effort into his early development to take advantage of that moment. The sociological interpretation is that what was “more than luck” was her social capital--she knew the staff member at the school--and informal rules that allowed the principal to let in an academically talented applicant rather than the next student on the admissions list. Yes, she was lucky a spot opened up, but she also had social advantages that allowed her to utilize the opportunity when it became available. Mia is an example of how the highly engaged and strategically connected parents are able to leverage resources, privilege and personal networks to gain access to desired schools for their children. Shadow admissions procedures like these indicate that the marketplace of educational choice is not entirely free or unbiased, at least in this case (Jason 2017).

Circumventing Barriers with Private School

Many of the parents surveyed had the resources to access private schools, generally in the form of money to cover tuition. These parents often expressed frustration with the public school system’s labyrinth of red tape and barriers to entry into the most desirable programs and schools. These economically advantaged parents seemed to feel entitled to personal attention from school staff, for example. Helen explained her experience trying to access a magnet program, “There was another school that I did like. It was, you know, email me by such a date and then look out for this other email within two weeks and then get on this waiting list and it was so much follow up. I don't have time for that kind
of follow up. I want to go here, pay, sign up, start, that's it.” Helen effectively chose to opt out of the
public school system, not because her or her children aren't capable of excelling in the programs she
would like them to attend, but because she feels the charter schools and magnet programs are not
accessible. She has decided the financial cost of private school is worth the benefits: guaranteed
acceptance and ready access to school staff are a better investment than the time and effort to have a
chance at gaining access to a high quality charter school or magnet program.

Other parents interviewed, primarily those with younger children in private school pre-
kindergarten and elementary programs, were taking advantage of private schools as a way to leverage
their children into a later public or charter program. Their hope is that early investment in quality private
education will give their children an early head start and improve their chances of accessing public
programs for later education. These parents placed their children into pre-kindergarten at 3 years old,
tested them for gifted by kindergarten and then began applying for high achieving programs early as
possible. This tactic makes sense, by investing early, parents can give their children the support they need
to be competitive in the school choice marketplace, later accessing highly sought after public programs
that don't cost the parents directly. Such strategic deployment of resources was not uncommon among the
middle and upper middle class white parents interviewed by Bader et al. (2019).

Profiles

In this section I will look at three parents as complete profiles. This allows us to see how the
parental concerns and tactics for managing the school choice system work together within the context of
the busy lives of Latinx mothers. The profiles also span differences in the sample in terms of income and
in terms of whether they see school choice as beneficial or harmful. The three profiles are: Helen, the
mother of a three-year-old she hopes to get into a dual-language magnet school program; Cara, a
journalist with a four-year-old who understands the politics of school choice more than most parents; and
finally Daria, a low-income mother with a disabled teenager attending a private school on a government
grant.
Helen

Helen has a three year old daughter who attends pre-kindergarten at a private school. She chose the school for a variety of reasons but primarily because of its curriculum. That the school was “registered as a school was top priority,” meaning that it's not a daycare, that her daughter's day includes age appropriate academic content and wasn't padded with superfluous activities, according to Helen. In comparison, one of the 10 schools she looked at had “handwashing, you know, 10 times on the curriculum.” This was enough of a reason for her to stop considering it.

She considered applying for a charter school program but found the application process too unwieldy. She felt she didn't have the time or the interest to email people back or be added to waiting lists. For her, it was far easier to choose a private school that would cut through all of that hassle and get her child into a classroom.

Helen hopes her daughter will be able to get into a dual-language magnet program, the same program she attended in her youth growing up in Miami. The program will start enrolling for kindergarten the following year and she plans to apply for her daughter as soon as she was old enough. When asked what her backup would be if her child doesn't make the lottery, Helen said, “My backup is to ensure that I make it in the lottery.” She clarified that if her daughter didn't get accepted in kindergarten then she would stay in the preschool where she is and try again the following year. She doesn't know what she will do beyond that.

Helen has “a lot of teacher friends and people in our educational system and they all assured me that the lotteries are strategically picked. That they're not really true lotteries and so I'm kinda hoping that that's the case.” Helen is using a variety of tactics and shares the views I've already discussed. She believes the school choice process is not entirely fair and she's doing everything she can for her daughter including early education and leveraging people in her network who work in the public school system. She’s counting on the system to be biased, “hoping” that's the case and that her work to give her daughter advantages to improve her chance of acceptance will pay off.
As a parent who has a clear, if rigid, idea of what school she wants for her child, something seen more commonly in private school alumni in the sample, her path is still unclear. She has still needed to take advantage of every resource, persona, academic and financial, she has to give her daughter a chance at the education she wants, and even with all of the privilege and resources, that path is still not a sure thing. The tendency of parents like Helen to pick one ideal option and work for it, or other parents to choose private school as a better option suggests that the marketplace may not be working as intended due to a lack of easily accessible and understandable information on school options (Finn, Manno, and Wright 2016).

*Cara*

Cara is a journalist with a four year old daughter. Her daughter is enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program at a public elementary school. Cara's daughter is the only child in this study enrolled at a public school that is neither magnet nor charter. However, the school is not the family's assigned neighborhood school. The neighborhood school's pre-kindergarten program was full, and Cara contended that good pre-K programs in the district are highly sought after and have fewer enrollment slots available than there are students seeking to enroll. Therefore, Cara had to navigate the school choice system to get her daughter into a quality program, making her experience not much different from the parents in this study seeking to access charter schools and magnet programs.

The previous year, at age three, her daughter was enrolled in a private preschool. Cara felt it was best to transition early as she plans to have her child in the public school system. The tuition at the private school was high and Cara heard through her personal networks that the new school was expanding their pre-kindergarten program by adding another class. She applied and was selected in the lottery. Thus, while the selection among applicants may have been random, knowledge of the opportunity was tied to social networks (Lareau et al. 2016). She was able to increase her chance of getting into a program by relying on a personal network of parents to alert her of an opportunity, a new class opening up. Other parents interviewed spoke of similar experiences such as receiving information about vacancies or even the establishment of new campuses connected to existing highly desirable charter franchises.
As a journalist, Cara is far more aware of the politics around the school choice system. She references the school district's superintendent by name and gave her opinion on the job he was doing shaping the district. She reported that she listens to school board meetings on the local news channel and has not just an awareness of how the process works but also an understanding of the political motivations behind it. She prefers public schools and distrusts the lack of transparency of charter schools. Cara and her husband are “hoping to trust this system” but admit that if their efforts fail they would consider private school even if tuition costs would be a challenge. She believes there is a fundamental difference between the autonomy of charter schools and private schools. In private schools, “they charge for tuition and then they, you know, that's what [the parents] invest in.” To her, this creates direct accountability to parents that the charter schools don't necessarily have. While she stated she trusts the school district superintendent and thinks he’s doing a good job, she feels that the charter school system as it exists in Florida doesn’t hold charter schools accountable in the same way and generally feels that “public money” should not be going to schools run by private organizations or companies who may prioritize profit over education.

Like Helen, Cara is hoping to get her daughter into a magnet program. Her first choice is a Spanish dual-language program but she's been surprised by how few such programs exist in the school district. She told me, “I was hoping that many schools would have had this [Spanish language] offering. And what I have found is that they're very selective and very difficult to get into.” She still plans to try to get her daughter into such a program. As an immigrant from Central America, she places a lot of importance on the cultural understanding that comes with access to a Spanish language program. Her backup plan is either an International Baccalaureate program or a magnet program that focuses on science and technology. Unlike Helen, she's dealt with the uncertainty of the school choice system by creating multiple possible paths of achievement for her daughter, doing extensive research, and by giving her every advantage in early childhood to excel.
Daria

Daria is a single mother of two. Her younger son is in 5th grade at a charter school and her older daughter is 18 and attends a private high school. Her daughter is disabled and a McKay scholarship covers her tuition. McKay scholarship is a state program intended to give Florida students with special needs access to a wider range of schools. Both the schools her children attend are smaller and this is an important concern for Daria. She emphasized the one-on-one care and attention her children receive as important to their success. She recounts the negative experience of having her son in a public school. While he received good grades she wanted more. “He received a bad teacher,” she said, and explained that the teacher was new and inexperienced and, because of the large class sizes, Daria felt that her son “got lost” in the class. Now “there are at least 10 less kids in his classes.” She attributes that and better trained teachers as the reason her son is doing better in the charter school he now attends.

The primary barrier to Daria enrolling her children in the schools she most wants has been cost. “I certainly couldn’t afford to put my daughter or either of my kids in the 30-grand-a-year private schools,” she told me when talking about her options. Daria has no income, as caring for her daughter is a full time job. She relies mostly on government programs and some child support to care for herself and her children. Even though she has a McKay scholarship, it only covers a set amount of tuition. She didn’t seem concerned about the other barriers to accessing schools of choice like bureaucratic obstacles, perhaps because she is used to navigating paperwork, appointments, and deadlines; her daughter sees two therapists and a psychologist regularly and a tutor three times a week.

When searching for schools, Daria relied on school ranking websites like http://greatschools.org and online parents groups on Facebook to navigate the school choice system. Impressively, her daughter has been to six different schools, public and private, the last of which is her current school. The school is a private school with ties to a religious group. Daria said that religion was not a factor when choosing the school. She says spiritual teachings are not part of the curriculum, however “they still do videos for [the students] as advertisements” on occasion. Daria dismisses the videos and other unusual aspects of the school because it’s a good fit for her daughter and it’s been a struggle to find a school that works.
Religious affiliated private schools are also generally cheaper than similar secular private schools. Non-religious private institutions are likely priced outside of her reach.

DISCUSSION

In this research I have attempted to gain a deeper understanding of how Latinx and Hispanic parents understand and navigate the school choice marketplace. I've focused on what aspects of their children's education they place the most importance on, what traits they look for in what they consider an ideal school. Second, I sought to reveal some insight into how they understood the school choice marketplace and as an extension, to understand the tactics they used to navigate and manage the system confronting them. Past work focused on a few large metropolitan areas in the Northeast and limited to White and sometimes Black families shows that decisions about optimal schooling are fraught with uncertainty and uneven access to information (Bader et al. 2019; Lareau et al. 2016), and among White families are often influenced by negative attitudes about racially diverse schools (Goyette et al. 2012; Saporito 2003). The few studies that have focused on the school choices of Hispanic and Latinx parents suggest they are more reliant on the opinions of family and friends and that the motives behind their choices in the aggregate seem to differ from that of Whites (Mavrogordato and Harris 2017; Mavrogordato and Stein 2016). In the context of Southeast Florida, where school choice options are abundant, Latinx families are overrepresented in schools of choice relative to their size of the population, but it's been unclear how cultural differences influence their selection process.

I've outlined a number of trends found in this initial research. Some are general findings that could be applied to all parents in the same socioeconomic status as the parents surveyed while others may apply more specifically to Latinx and Hispanic parents. Parents interviewed consistently cited the decisions and direct recommendations of friends and family members when choosing a school before considering other indicators of school quality such as school ranking websites or official state reported school grades. In this sense, relatively advantaged Latinx parents in Southeast Florida reflect the middle class and upper middle class parents interviewed by Lareau et al. (Bader et al. 2019; Lareau 2011). Yet the significance of family appears to be even stronger among these parents, perhaps reflecting the cultural
trait of “familism” (Sabogal et al. 1987). Even parents who cited curriculum as their primary concern, they still highly valued schools that were smaller and had a sense of community, where parents were involved, where “everyone knew” their child, and where there was a support structure of family friends and relatives who could share transportation and scheduling responsibilities. Many of the Latinx parents I talked to saw family and community as a way to assure and access the traits they desired in their school; high academic achievement, cultural inclusion, and a support structure to handle the challenges of transportation and scheduling around their family's busy life. Also seemingly unique in this population is the desire to have one’s children attend the same school, even be taught by the same teachers, as the parent.

Parents' perception of the school choice system and how they chose to navigate it's challenges highlighted two significant trends. First, almost universally they believed the system is not fair and is based on skewed selection methods and opposed to a random and impartial lottery. They believed they could do things to improve their children's chances of acceptance either through academic resources such as early enrollment in pre-kindergarten programs and gifted testing, or through the “people they knew” who could give them insider information or possibly even manipulate the outcomes directly. Second, they believed the system was intentionally designed to be difficult. Parents spoke of how the work necessary to access the best schools was significant, that they were required to invest time into school tours. They also noted that the systems were inconvenient for families with busy schedules, a missed deadline or a test scheduled at the wrong time could derail their access to a school they've been working towards for years. These concerns also are consistent with those of the economically advantaged White parents in Lareau’s study, befuddled by the complexity of the process and the associated uncertainty, especially for those contemplating charter, magnet, and private avenues for exercising school choice (Lareau 2011).

Many parents, five of them in this study, chose to circumvent the public school choice system entirely by enrolling their children in private schools. Some of these parents intended to keep their children in private school through high school, the investment in tuition preferable to navigating the red tape and uncertainty of the public choice system. Other parents have plans to enroll their children into
prestigious magnet programs in later grades, counting on the early investment in education to pay off with access to a better public program later. Either way, these parents had clear plans for their children’s academic futures and they chose tactics to ensure those futures based on the process of school choice and minimizing uncertainty. Some parents did this by rejecting the public system all together and paying tuition to a private school. Those that chose to navigate the public school choice marketplace either focused heavily on a single material goal, such as enrollment in a specific magnet school, or focused on giving themselves and their children the best chance possible of being accepted to a highly sought after school if the opportunity presented itself. By contrast, the one low income parent in the study, downplayed the challenges of the school choice program. As a parent relying on a variety of government programs to support her disabled daughter, she has accepted and normalized the need to navigate barriers that the more privileged participants found unacceptable.

The small sample size of this preliminary study prevents me from making any strong claims. In addition the sampling methodology has resulted in a participant sample that consists primarily of middle and upper middle class parents with young children who are actively engaged in the school choice marketplace. To get a fuller picture of what is happening would require expanding the sample to at least 30 parents, setting quotas to ensure a more even distribution of interviewees across the spectrum of socioeconomic status, and setting quotas to ensure a more equal distribution across traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools, and private schools. The most significant challenge would be accessing parents of lower socioeconomic status who are both unlikely to engage with the school system more than necessary and are unlikely to trust or participate in a study that they see coming from a person of authority connected with the school system (Lareau 2011). A sample with more low income parents and parents with children in traditional public schools would likely highlight different themes such as disengagement and alienation from the school choice system similar to those found in Lareau’s research (2011).

This study has reinforced key findings in research cited at the start of this article. Latinx and Hispanic parents have a stronger tendency to rely on networks of family and close friends to help them
find and access better schools. My interviews seem to bear out this trend observed by Mavrogordato and Stein (Mavrogordato and Stein 2016) that parents within the cultural group value the opinions of their close social connections, sometimes more so than other official or objective resources such as school rating websites or contact with school staff. The tendency of certain parents to focus so heavily on family connections, even so far as enrolling their children in the same schools they attended in their childhood, shows the influence of familism within Hispanic and Latinx communities even among families who have attained middle class status (Sabogal et al. 1987). Many of the parents were interested in dual language programs as a way of connecting their children to their cultural roots as much as for the academic benefits. That the majority of parents eventually gave up on this goal and some even showed surprise and frustration that more such programs were not available in an area with so many Latinx people shows a facet of the frustration and stress that parents experience when engaging with the school choice marketplace that is unique to this community. While they didn’t experience the same marginalization and language barriers that other Latinx families face (2016), they still found it difficult to access schools that meet their cultural expectations even in a minority majority district. It’s difficult to know how families with lower incomes utilize these same resources, if they even have them available. It’s not clear if close family members offer the same benefits if none of them know how to navigate the school choice system or feel comfortable engaging with staff and administrators in constructive ways.

Even the most economically advantaged of the parents spoke of difficulties with scheduling and transportation when determining which schools were feasible for their children, taking into consideration the proximity of the school to home, work or relatives who could pick them up, the availability of extracurricular programs during work hours, and the presence of a network of friends or family who could help manage picking up, dropping off and shuttling around children within their busy schedules. This suggests that choices are constrained even for privileged families (Lareau 2011) and suggests that students in lower socioeconomic families may be entirely barred from many school choice options due to real material barriers such as transportation, in addition to other barriers such as institutional knowledge and academic resources. Of the two parents in this study with income under $50,000 a year, neither
expressed issues with the school choice system. Daria, who navigates multiple bureaucracies and support systems to provide for her disabled daughter, downplayed the complexities of the systems she relies on to provide for her children and herself. When asked about the process of accessing the McKay scholarship, she described it as a “simple” task of completing paperwork and talking with school administrators about her needs until she found one that could accommodate her daughter, a process more arduous than what many other parents in this study with greater means felt was unacceptable.

The themes emerging in these conversations with parents suggests that for even the most economically advantaged, education is a significant concern and a burden. Miami-Dade has more charter, magnet and private school options than most places in the US. This suggests that parents who wanted it would have more access to quality programs, but these accounts don't bear that out. The number of people opting-out of the public school system for private institutions shows there may be a serious problem. If the purpose of school choice is, as advocates say, to give every student the opportunity to access a quality education and excel, then these narratives should be worrisome. Within the population of Latinx and Hispanic families I researched there are, like in every other cultural group, those who are struggling to obtain access to the resources many take for granted and there are those with privilege who take those resources for granted. If one of the purposes of the school choice system is to help level that inequality, the existing system does not seem to be achieving that goal.
WORKS CITED


Latinx Parent Interview Introduction Form

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study. We are doing this study to understand how parents in Latino and Hispanic communities choose a school for their children. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a phone interview that will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes.

We will make an audio recording of the interview.

We will store your information in ways we think are secure. We will store paper files in locked filing cabinets. We will store electronic files in computer systems with password protection. However, we cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

Your name, the names of your children and any other identifying information you provide will NOT be included in any published material and will be kept secure and confidential to the best of our ability.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator, Rei Myers at 321-427-8821, rwm17@my.fsu.edu, or the faculty advisor Dr. John R. Reynolds at jreynolds@fsu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, or regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at telephone number 850-644-7900. You may also contact this office by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu, or by writing or in person at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, FSU Human Subjects Committee, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742.

Do you understand and consent to these terms?

○ Yes, I consent.
○ No, I do not consent.

The purpose of the following questions is to:
1. Determine your eligibility for this study,
2. Collect contact information and other basic information now so we can reduce the length of your interview,
3. Give the researcher some background information they can use to prepare for the interview. This information will be segregated from your interview recording and transcript. Your identifying information will be protected and will not be included in any analysis or publication of the data.

Do you or your co-parent identify as Latino or Hispanic?

○ Yes
○ No

Do you have one or more children who are currently enrolled or soon to be enrolled in elementary, middle or high school in Miami-Dade County?
Based on your answers to the previous questions, you unfortunately do not qualify for this study. You can still help with this study by sharing it with friends and family who may qualify to participate.

SHARE BY EMAIL | SHARE ON FACEBOOK | SHARE ON TWITTER

The direct link to this survey is: http://bit.ly/miamiparentstudy

Thank you!

For each of your children in elementary, middle or high school, please complete the following information:

**Child #X**

Child’s Name
Child’s Age
Child’s Grade
Name of Child’s School

Finally, these questions are to make sure I have correct contact information and to begin scheduling a time for the interview.

The interview will take between 10 and 20 minutes.

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How would you prefer to do the interview?
  o  Phone
  o  Google Hangout
  o  Skype
  o  Something else (I cannot do Facetime, otherwise I will work to accommodate your preference when possible.)

End of Block: Contact Info
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Consent Agreement: This interview is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions I ask or to end the interview at any time. Your information will be kept secure and confidential to the best of my ability. This interview is being recorded and will be transcribed to text to be analyzed. Your name, the name(s) of your child(ren), and all other identifying information will be anonymized in the transcript and all content published as part of this study.

- Do you understand all of this and agree?
- Do you have any questions?

1. Tell me about your children and the schools they attend.
   - Has he been there since K? Pre-school?
   - Do they do well in school – academics, extracurricular, sports, etc.?
   - What school or schools do they attend?

2. How do you feel about the school your child attends?
   - What are positive aspects of the school?
   - What are the negative aspects of the school?
   - Do you feel empowered to advocate on your child’s behalf?

3. How and why did you decide this school was the right one?
   - Were other schools considered?
   - What criteria was used?
   - What is most important to you in schooling? Why?

4. How did you collect information about school options available?
   - Do you still have any of those materials and would you be able to share them with me?
   - Was the school choice process easy or difficult – fair or unfair?
   - How did you learn how the school choice system works?

5. Did you feel you encountered barriers because of your race/gender/income/etc?

6. How do you feel about the other types of schools in the district like (traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools, and private schools)?
   - Do some types feel inaccessible? Why?
   - Are some types lower quality or less desirable? Why?
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE of the VICE PRESIDENT for RESEARCH

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

November 25, 2019

Raymond Myers, rwm17@my.fsu.edu

Dear Raymond Myers:

On 11/25/2019, the IRB staff reviewed the following submission:

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<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Exempt (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Perceptions of Charter Schools, A Study of Latinx Parents' Engagement in School Choice</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Study ID:</td>
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<td>Funding:</td>
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<td>Grant ID:</td>
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<tr>
<td>IND, IDE, or HDE:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents Reviewed:</td>
<td>* hrp-503a-sbs-protocol-rmyers-v1-with-attachments.pdf; Category: IRB Protocol; * Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials;</td>
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</table>

The IRB staff determined the protocol qualifies for exemption, effective on 11/25/2019.

You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project that may alter this exemption determination must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the applicable requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the Library within the RAMP IRB system.

Sincerely,

Office for Human Subjects Protection (OHSP)
Florida State University Office of Research
2010 Levy Avenue, Building B Suite 276
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742
Phone: 850-644-7900
OHSP Group Email: humansubjects@fsu.edu
OHSP Web: https://www.research.fsu.edu/hs