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A Case Study of Traditional Public-School Principals? Perceptions of and Responses to Charter School Competition Through the Lens of Social Justice Leadership

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PERCEPTIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO CHARTER SCHOOL COMPETITION

THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP, by SHEVAN O. HOWARD,

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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representa-

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A CASE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL PUBLIC-SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF
AND RESPONSES TO CHARTER SCHOOL COMPETITION THROUGH THE LENS OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

by

SHEVAN HOWARD

Under the Direction of Kristina Brezicha, Ph. D.

ABSTRACT

Over the last several decades, charter schools have proliferated across the United States
promising to close the persistent achievement gap between White and Black students. As the
number of charter schools has increased, competition between charter and traditional public
schools for students has had several impacts on the educational experiences of these students
(Winters, 2020). While studies have focused primarily on the impact of student outcomes when
comparing charter schools and traditional public schools, there are limited studies that examine
traditional public school (TPS) principals' perspectives of charter school competitors. In this
study, I focus on social justice principals' perceptions of and responses to charter school
competition. I use the term social justice principals to refer to TPS principals who: (1)
understand that equity in redistribution, recognition, and representation requires the reversal of
systematic/institutional injustice (Wang, 2016) and who address inequity by bringing theory to
practice to achieve more equitable and just schools. I focus on social justice principals because
their commitment to educational equity speaks to the social justice implications. Using a case

study design, I purposefully selected seven public school principals in a district with a high concentration of charters schools. I ask the following research questions: What are the perceptions of social justice principals of TPSs about the proliferation of charter schools? How do social justice principals of TPSs respond to charter school competition? How do social justice principals' responses to charter school competition impact their work in addressing educational inequities? Using document analysis, individual interviews, and focus group interviews, the following findings emerged from the study: 1) social justice principals of TPSs either collaborate, compete, or work to change the perceptions when faced with charter school competition, and 2) social justice principals of TPSs exhibit intentionality, provide opportunity for dialogue for stakeholders, and provide support and access to resources.

INDEX WORDS: Social Justice Leadership, Charter Competition, Traditional Public Schools

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I give thanks and praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am thankful that he did not allow me to give up or give in when faced with difficulties. I dedicate this body of work to my deceased grandmother, Agnes Black-Lawrence. My grandmother was a woman who loved the Lord and was an example of what it means to persevere. With little formal education, my grandmother understood the importance of an education, and she positioned her children and grandchildren to have the best opportunity of an education. I also dedicate this to my mother, Althea Bent. My mother is unwavering in her love and support for me. She has instilled in me confidence and self-worth. As my number one supporter, I am beyond happy to share this moment with her.

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- My mother, siblings, aunts, and cousins for uplifting me. While they uplift me, they also keep me grounded and rooted in my values and culture.

- My EdD cohort members for your encouragement and support across the finishing line. Lastly, thank you to my dissertation committee.

I love and appreciate all of you for helping me to get to this point.

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INTRODUCTION

The achievement gap between African American and White students remains an ongoing problem for the American educational system (Madyun, 2011; Raskin et al., 2015). The achievement gap signifies that African American students consistently receive lower test scores, teacher expectations, and allocation of resources (Brown, 2006). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), using the 2011 NAEP grade eight mathematics assessment data, found that nationally, African American students scored on average thirty points lower than their White peers (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Importantly in highly segregated African American schools, African American students performed significantly lower than the average African American student (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). This trend in the achievement gap is not new, as the Coleman Report of 1969 highlighted this equity gap in education (Gordon, 2017). In addressing this persistent inequity, several reform efforts have emerged as potential alternatives. One such reform effort is the creation of charter schools.

Charter school proponents argue that school choice leads to innovation in organizational behavior and ultimately improved school outcomes. Charter proponents suggest that charter schools might improve academic achievement by providing more effective learning environments, hiring more effective teachers, using resources more efficiently, and attracting more motivated students that stimulate other students (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). Proponents of charter schools argue that charter schools close the achievement gap between African American and White students (Almond, 2012; Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Corcoran & Stoddard, 2011). Angrist

et al. (2012) found that urban charter schools increased achievement levels in comparison to urban TPS for African American students.

However, other studies have shown a widening gap in achievement within charter schools between African American students and White students. Bifulco and Ladd (2006) noted a study of North Carolina charter schools that showed test scores actually widened between African American students and White students. Additionally, Shin et al. (2017) found that conversion charter schools, or TPS that have converted to charter schools, in Los Angeles maintained or widened achievement gaps with TPS while startup charters showed no change in achievement relative to TPS. These studies indicate that there is no definitive evidence that charter schools are closing achievement gaps between African American students and White students.

Some proponents have asserted that charter schools will improve TPS performance through a market mechanism like competition (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). They suggest that the competition stimulated by charter schools may help improve traditional public schools (TPS). Studies like Davis (2013) examined how school organization mediates the relationship between competition and achievement when there is competition between charter schools and TPS. Davis (2013) showed that charter competition improves small aspects of TPS organization, like teacher control of curriculum, teacher absenteeism, and parent-teacher engagement and had a modest impact on student achievement. Hoxby (2002), using the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data, argued that TPS students' achievement significantly improved because of charter competition. Additionally, using the North Carolina Statewide test for third through eighth grade math and reading, and grades four and seven in writing, Holmes et al. (2006) provided evidence that charter school competition raised the performance composite of TPS.

However, studies focusing on competition between TPS and charters reveal mixed results in closing the achievement gap. For example, Chapman & Donnor (2015), indicated that when looking at statewide math and reading scores in urban centers like Boston and Milwaukee, charter school competition did not help close the achievement gaps between African American and White students.

When discussing student outcomes and the achievement gap, it is impossible not to talk about the critical role of school principals who help set a schoolwide vision, commitment to high-standards, and a focus on the academic success of all students. Over the last three decades, research has consistently supported the importance of school leaders' holding high expectations for all students and that this is one of the primary keys to closing the achievement gap (Raskin et al., 2015). The role of today's principal is constantly shifting and encompasses a variety of responsibilities and charges. One aspect of the principal's role however remains the same – establishing school culture. For social justice principals (SJPs), a central part of fostering this school culture lies in providing the conditions and roadmap for closing the achievement gap (Raskin et al., 2015).

SJPs can close achievement gaps, given that they have ability to make decisions that impact students directly. From this point forward, I will use the term Social Justice Principals or SJPs to refer to principals who espouse the key practices of social justice leadership. In looking at principal leadership, Raskin et al. (2015) noted that effective SJPs make significant and meaningful changes in schools to ensure increased levels of achievement for African American students. Effective SJPs employ five key practices for closing achievement gaps: 1) shaping a vision for academic success for all students; 2) creating a climate hospitable to education; 3) cultivating leadership in others; 4) improving instruction; and 5) managing people, data, and

processes to foster school improvement (Raskin et al., 2015). Additionally, principals must go beyond achievement indicators and the practices mentioned above to have lasting impact on closing equity gaps. The equity gaps in schools represent a microcosm of inequity in the general society. Therefore, when principals address equity gaps in schools they should be addressing these gaps through the lens of the broader society. Importantly, though, Jabbar (2016) noted that principals' efforts to ensure educational equity are often constrained by existing structures that reinforce inequities in a competitive charter marketplace. These structures include race, socioeconomic status, institutions, and position in the network of competitors, and are rooted in a hierarchical system. SJPs work to address the systemic issues that impacts equity gaps.

SJPs both recognize and address the reproduction of hierarchical, unequal, societal systems in education. SJPs are motivated to create and sustain school cultures that not only support students' academic success but also their overall physical, social, and emotional well-being (Theoharis, 2007). In defining SJPs, which falls under the umbrella term of Social Justice Leaders (SJL), Oplatka and Arar (2015) noted that there are no right or objective model for social justice leadership. In this study, the definition of a social justice leader is one who:

- Decreases the achievement gaps.

- Intensifies social justice in school. A leader who advocates for inclusion, allows for every student to access resources, and acknowledges the claims of historically marginalized groups.

- Incorporates democratic/ethical values. A leader that allows the rights of students and teachers to have their voices heard. A leader that engages in a participatory leadership style in schools that involves democratic governance system.

- Engages in critical dialogue and self-reflection. Dialogical practices provide a bridge that brings together communities with differences to overcome powerful barriers. Self-reflection allows for leaders to assess their educational values, philosophies, processes, structures, as well as identify their prejudice and assumptions. (Oplatka & Arar, 2015)

One may look at the SJP as the agent of change to address inequity, as the principal is essential for schoolwide change, priorities, and vision (Brown, 2006). Therefore, SJPs must level the field for minoritized groups. SJPs can create leverage with bold and aggressive actions to improve equity in education for racial and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Brown, 2006). The perspectives of TPS social justice principals, which I will refer to as TPS SJPs throughout this dissertation, must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the experiences and challenges that charter school competition actually levy on a school's ability to achieve educational equity.

Problem Statement

While it is essential to study the effect of charter competition on student achievement, it is also necessary to understand TPS SJPs' perspectives on and responses to charter competition (Jabbar & Li, 2016). However, few studies have examined how TPS SJPs view charter school competitors (Jabbar & Li, 2016). Additionally, there is limited literature on how TPS SJPs perceive and respond to charter competition. The extant research shows that principals' perceptions of charter competition are diverse in terms of geography, school similarity, and principal characteristics (Jabbar, 2015).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how traditional public school social justice principals (TPS SJPs) perceive and respond to charter school competition while addressing educational inequities. In the hopes of identifying specific practices of TPS SJPs, this qualitative case study examined the following research questions:

1) What are the perceptions of traditional public school social justice principals about the proliferation of charter schools?

2) How do traditional public school social justice principals respond to charter school competition?

3) How do traditional public school social justice principals' responses to charter school competition impact their work in addressing educational inequities?

Significance

This study adds to the research on principals' perspectives of charter competition by looking specifically at TPS SJPs. Jabbar (2015) noted that the research on principals' perspectives toward charter competition is complex and under-conceptualized. There is a limited understanding of how school competition operates in practice from the perspective of school leaders (Jabbar, 2015). To examine the social justice principals' response to charter competition, I present a review of literature on charter competition and TPS principals' perspectives of charter schools. The principals' perspectives are examined through the theoretical lens of social justice leadership. Next, I describe the study's methodology including a detailed explanation of the research design and analysis for the study. I conclude with the study's findings and a subsequent discussion of those findings.

Review of Literature

I conducted a literature review to examine research on the charter reform model, market theory, charter school competition, and principals' perceptions of charter competition. The charter reform model advocates for innovation and choice, which is underpinned by market theory. Therefore, I will provide a review of charter reform and market theory prior to the literature on charter competition. I review the literature on TPS principals' perceptions of charter

schools. Lastly, I discuss the gaps in the literature. I conclude with a review of the theoretical framework for this study.

Charter Reform Model

In 1991, Minnesota passed the first state-legislated charter plan. Since then, forty-one states have passed charter laws including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Charter schools are publicly funded and have more freedoms and autonomy from state mandates to set curricula, control staffing, and manage operations (Barr et al., 2006; Linick & Lubienski, 2013). Therefore, some charter schools offer innovative, effective educational options (Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011). School choice advocates believe that competition from charter schools will force TPS to respond more effectively to the needs of underserved populations, offer better alternatives for parents, and improve student achievement (Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011).

Market Theory

A review of market theory research revealed how market theory underpins the charter school movement (Cannata, 2011; Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). Market theorist believe that the choice and competition that comes from open markets will lead to innovation and improvement in organizational behavior (Lubienski, 2003). With market theory, parents are afforded options through school choice. In a free market, parents have a choice as to where to send their children to school. Therefore, schools are forced to compete for students and thus work hard to make their schools attractive choices. As a conceptual frame used to explain market processes in economics, market theory is also used in education to explain how charter school competition forces innovation (Davis, 2013; Lubienski, 2003). Competitive markets allow for freedom of choice and consumer mobility. The theory suggests that increased competitiveness between schools will produce innovation, efficiency, and higher test results

(Davis, 2013; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). Additionally, market theorists postulate that parents' demands for superior academic performance from schools creates a competitive educational marketplace (Cannata, 2011; Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Lubienski, 2003). However, there are other factors than superior academic performance that influence parents' demand. These factors may include charters that cater to a certain niche like ethnic groups or social classes, and often certain curricula (Shin et al., 2017). Market theorists also assume that pure competition operates in education (Kamienski, 2011; Lubienski, 2003). However, Linick (2014) disagreed that pure competition operates in education, since schools receive predetermined revenues and are unable to maximize profit. Because market theorists posit that competition produces efficiencies via innovation (Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014), market theory is fundamental to studying charter school competition.

In studying charter school competition, market theorists note the impact of competition on productivity. Market theorists argued that markets with more competition are more productive and efficient than markets with no competition (Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). For example, Lubienski (2003) explained that demands for productive schools may cause competing schools to demonstrate superior academic performance (Cannata, 2011; Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Lubienski, 2003). However, others have argued that the presence of charter schools may not automatically induce a competitive response (Linick, 2014; Lubienski, 2003). The consideration of institutional factors like central office mandates and teacher quality, and environmental factors like location and economics, may prevent TPS from responding effectively to competitive pressure (Linick, 2014). Still, market theory is viewed by some as a viable reform strategy that will create equitable education opportunities and produce new and better options for parents (Chapman & Donnor, 2015).

Charter School Competition

Like the research on school achievement, charter school researchers are challenged in defining competition. The literature of charter competition reveals an inconsistency in how the metrics for competition are defined (Linick, 2014; Ni & Arsen, 2010). Researchers have two challenges in defining charter competition. The first challenge is defining the type of environment necessary for competition. The second challenge is measuring the impact of charter competition on student achievement. This section of the literature review will look at the environment and the measures for charter competition. After reviewing the two ways previous studies have defined charter competition, I will define charter competition for the purposes of this study.

Environment for Charter Competition

When researchers study charter competition, they recognize that a competitive environment has been created as a result of the creation of charter schools alongside TPSs. Studies have identified location, proximity, and concentration of charter schools as measures of this competitive environment. For example, the distance between TPSs and charter schools is one measure that defines parameters for competition (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Holmes et al., 2006). Other studies have used the percentages of students, typically six percent of the student population attending charter schools within a specific distance of TPSs, as a measure of competition (Cannata, 2011; Davis, 2013; Holmes et al., 2006; Lubienski, 2003; Lubienski & Gulosino, 2011). In their study, Maranto et al. (2010) identified school type as another measure—private schools, charter schools, or other TPS. Maranto et al. (2010) definition of competition aligns with Jabbar (2015), who argued the importance of examining the kinds of schools with which principals compete. Overall, the inconsistencies in definitions and

competition measurements may obscure our understanding of charter schools' effects on TPSs. Adding to the vague definition of competition, Linick (2014) argued that previous studies may have examined the effect of choice and not competition. In defining competition, Linick (2014) highlighted the response to competition as key to determining competition. Therefore, the environment for competition requires the option of choice, and as a result, the response determines competition. In other words, if parents choose School A but School B does not respond to the parents' choice, then School B has not engaged in the competition.

Measures for Charter Competition

The measure of charter competition can be classified by the TPS' competitive response, which is defined as an outcome of an action or decision taken by a TPS based on competition from a charter school. Given the inconsistency in the literature on the response measure of charter school competition, Maranto et al. (2010) classified response measures to competition in two ways: input response (i.e., expenditure per pupil, teacher hiring practices) and output response (i.e., test scores, graduation rates).

First, the input responses are associated with resource allocation (Linick, 2014; Maranto et al., 2010). These resource allocations include different expenditure types like personnel, curriculum, activities, infrastructure, transportation, and food services (Linick, 2016). Charter schools may allocate resources based on what will give them a competitive edge in the market (Arsen, & Ni, 2012). For example, charters may allocate resources to attract a niche market with a specialized instructional program. These programs may include STEM or culturally-affirming curriculum. Also, charters may create various educational models that center around longer instructional time, frequent teacher feedback, intensive tutoring, and the use of the "No Excuses" instructional approach (Angrist et al., 2012; Chabrier et al., 2016; Furgeson et al., 2011). Linick

(2014) noted that instructional resources allocation of TPS districts are impacted by charter policies. The response from TPS, in theory should force TPS to focus resources on more instructional activities to raise student achievement. However, studies found that competition from charter schools did not spur TPS to shift resources to more instructional activities (Arsen & Ni, 2012; Linick, 2014).

Secondly, the output response is associated with productivity (Hoxby, 2002). For example, Hoxby used scaled scores, national percentile scores, and state-mandated test scores to measure productivity. According to Hoxby, charter schools gain a competitive edge and outperform TPS when productivity is measured via student achievement per dollar spent and competition is defined by the distance between TPS and charter schools. In examining the link between charter schools in North Carolina and average student proficiency rates, Holmes et al. (2006) provided evidence that charter school competition raises the performance composite of TPS students on statewide test in grades three through eight in math and reading, and in grades four and seven in writing.

Definition of Charter Competition. For this study, the criteria considered for charter competition are environmental factors and response measures. The definition for environmental factors derives from studies by Jabbar (2015) and Linick (2014). In line with Jabbar (2015) findings that TPS schools and leader characteristics are significant predictors for competition, this study used factors like charter brand, charter authorizer, principal characteristics, and school performance. Competition exists when choice is coupled with an effort by one or more parties to produce superior results than the other (Linick, 2014). Thus, charter schools within the local environments or cluster of similar schools are considered potential competitors. In addition, for

charter competition to be present, this study used the response measures defined by Maranto et al. (2010) based on resource allocation and the impact of the allocation on student outcomes.

Principals' Perceptions of Charter Competition

There are few studies on principals' perceptions of charter competition. Although some studies on charter competition posit that competitive pressures drive change in TPS (Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014, Lubienski, 2003), it is important to consider principals' roles in navigating these pressures because of their capacity to effectuate change in schools. A review of these studies provided some insight of principals' perceptions and responses to charter competition. Overall, TPS principals perceived competition due to a charter school's proximity but none of the studies provided definitive answers to how TPS principals made changes as a result of charter competition (Jabbar, 2015, 2016).

In studies on TPS principals' perceptions of charter competition, Jabbar (2015, 2016) used the structure of markets to explain how principals perceive competition. These market structures include the social, political, and economic structures that may constrain a leader's decision making. Jabbar examined competition based on the types of schools a principal competed with and not just proximity of the charter school. In alignment with Maranto et al. (2010), Jabbar (2016) also focused on charter competition and the response type. This study identified types of responses to competition as changes in resource allocation, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and/or changes to operational strategies based on perceived actions of rivals in the market. TPS principals may face real pressures from competition and find it difficult to resist competing with charter schools (Jabbar, 2015). As such, in her 2015 study, Jabbar found that geography and student transfer do not fully explain how principals in New Orleans perceive competition. In her 2016 study, Jabbar was able to broaden the response mechanism of principals

to charter competition to include social and political influences. She incorporated additional school and principal characteristics—such as need for sociability, approval, status, and power—to yield statistically significant results that predicted perception of competition. As a result, Jabbar noted that principals reported competing with schools that were geographically closer as well as those that were not close with higher academic performances. The findings again suggested that the mechanisms of competition are more complex than they have been assumed to be in previous studies and in policy discussions. The implication is that principals' behaviors in response to competition are embedded within their broader perceptions of the market and are influenced by their ''perceptual set'' of rivals (Jabbar, 2015, p.1125). Therefore, principal responses and actions are shaped by a mix of factors.

According to studies on TPS principal perception of private competition, Jabbar and Li (2016) explored the extent to which principals in New Orleans perceived private schools as competitors. Assuming that charter schools are an extension of public-school privatization, Jabbar and Li posited that private schools may have a similar impact on principals' perceptions given the flexibility and autonomy afforded to them under the New Orleans voucher program. They found that over half of TPS principals viewed at least one private school as a competitor and that private schools in closer proximity to public schools were more likely to be viewed as competitors. The findings noted principals' ambivalence toward private schools because they either lost few students to private schools through the voucher option, or because students lost to private schools often returned soon thereafter.

In her study of charter competition, Cannata (2011) used geographic distance as a basis for determining principals' perceptions of competition. Cannata (2011) asked principals about the perceived effect of charter school competition on five domains: acquiring financial resources,

recruiting and retaining teachers, attracting, and retaining students. In addition, Cannata (2011) examined how principals spent their time on routine management, instructional improvement, and public relations. Cannata (2011) found that principals perceived negligible impact on their financial resources and recruitment of teachers and students. For example, she noted this limited impact on public school principals' ability to attract and retain teachers and students when the charter school was nearby. Additionally, Cannata (2011) perceived no impact on how principals allocated financial resources when reacting to charter school competitive pressures and noted no significant changes in how principals spent their time on routine management, instructional improvement, and public relations.

Gap in the Literature

A review of literature revealed gaps in the study of charter competition. First, the idea that pure competition does not exist in education is rarely addressed given the market theory justification for charter schools (Hoxby, 2002; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). The education arena is not driven simply by supply and demand. This means consumers in the education arena do not have the autonomy to choose schools freely. Consumers do not operate in a perfect market situation because they neither have access to all the information nor are they perfectly rational (Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). Second, there is inconsistency in how studies define parameters for competition. Some studies used geographic location (Davis, 2013; Holmes et al., 2006), while other studies used a combination of geographic location and other factors like organizational culture, demographics, socioeconomic characteristics to determine competition (Arsen & Ni, 2012; Jabbar, 2015; Kamienski, 2011; Maranto et al., 2010). Third, the studies focused on district or individual school organizations' response to competition (Linick, 2014; Linick & Lubienski, 2013; Arsen & Ni, 2012; Maranto et al, 2010) and rarely on principals'

responses. Studies that focused on individual school organizations' response to competition showed that principal leadership is a mediator for improving student achievement (Davis, 2013; Holmes et al., 2006; Kamienski, 2011). Given principals' impact on schools to improve student achievement, principals' perceptions are pivotal to this study. Fourth, there are few studies (Cannata, 2011; Jabbar, 2015) that directly focused on TPS principals and their perceptions of charter school competition. Given principals' efforts to innovate, increase effort and commitment from teachers, improve parental involvement, and expand opportunities to impact the competitiveness of a school (Lubienski, 2003), there is a need for more studies that focus on the principal. Lastly, there is no literature that focuses on charter school competition and TPS principals who consider themselves social justice leaders. Therefore, it is important to look at how the phenomena of charter school competition impacts the SJL principal perspective.

Theoretical Framework

This study examined charter competition through the lens of Social Justice Leadership (SJL) as it can address social inequity in education (Howard & Navarro, 2016). First, I define social justice and social capital, a key component of social justice leadership. Then, I discuss social capital's connection to SJL followed by a discussion of the key component of social justice and charter school competition. Finally, I conclude with a summary on why SJL gives insight on principals' perspectives on charter competition.

Social Justice Leadership

Forde & Torrance (2017) defined social justice leaders as "agents who are called to initiate change in classrooms, school buildings, districts, and communities toward equity and inclusion,' working for 'substantive change in their schools" (p. 109). Additionally, Wang (2016) noted that principals who have a social justice commitment are regarded as social and

professional activists, change agents, moral leaders, reflective practitioners, mindful, democratic, critical leaders, and superhero/collaborative leaders.

Social Justice

Fraser (2000) argued that the concept of social justice should be understood from the standpoint of three interrelated dimensions: redistribution, recognition, and representation. Therefore, each term is defined before concluding with a definition of social justice. Redistribution rests on the moral principle of equal distribution of material and social goods (Fraser, 2000; Powers, 2012; Wang, 2016). The principle of redistribution is based on the belief that diverse groups have different starting points and require different treatment (Wang, 2016). Recognition is defined in terms of cultural domination where non-recognition and disrespect produces cultural injustice (Fraser, 2000; Powers, 2012; Wang, 2016). Consequently, the goal of recognition is to foster a "difference-friendly world" along the dimensions of nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation (Wang, 2016). Fraser (2000) and Wang (2016) argued for the recognition of differences by revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups while recognizing and positively appraising cultural diversity. Representation is the political dimension that focuses on who has the power to make decisions (Fraser, 2000; Powers, 2012; Wang, 2016). Representation is important for the relationship between school and community (Cazden, 2012).

While I have defined redistribution, recognition and representation separately, the concepts are intimately linked. Fraser (2000) noted that social justice requires both redistribution and recognition to address socioeconomic restriction and cultural misrecognition. In addition, representation is key to social justice because it encompasses both redistribution and recognition. For instance, representation empowers groups to address issues of equity associated with

redistribution and recognition. For example, the size of the group, the assets of the group, and the

recognition within society can reduce societal inequalities (Galindo et al., 2017). To promote

social and economic change, Fraser (2000) explained that integration of redistribution,

representation, and recognition provides a comprehensive framework to analyze societal

institutions and social movements like charter schools. To understand the relationship between

the three dimensions on social justice leadership and charter school competition, I will first

explain the construct of social capital.

  Social Capital. Social capital is defined as the resources generated from a network of

individuals with shared norms, values, and expectations in a well-functioning system (Galindo et

al., 2017; Gooden et al., 2016; Tsang, 2009). As such, social capital is a constituted network of

individuals. Social capital is measured by the size of the network, the structure in terms of

positions, hierarchies, and types of relations, and the number of resources. The network of

individuals includes colleagues, mentors, and professionals that connects and

enhances learning and professional development. These individual networks have common goals

with shared beliefs. Social capital enables effective leadership because people with shared social

capital feel more connected and invested in the community (Gooden et al., 2016). TPS SJPs may

leverage social capital to address inequities perpetuated by the continuous equity gap and the

advent of charter school competition. For example, a principal that is the president of a social

network, like a state principal leadership organization, gains connections to partnerships and

resources for his or her school because of the principal's position in the social network.

Additionally, a principal's position in the social network enables him or her to cast a wide net in

comparison to a principal that is not a part of the network. Consequently, Halpern (2005) noted

that social capital has significant impacts on educational outcome.

There are a few ways in which social capital is utilized to effectuate change. To effectuate change, social capital can bond, bridge, and/or link forces of social resources. Bonding social capital is when homogeneous groups have exclusive ties that build strong group cohesion. Bridging social capital involves expanding access to useful resources by connecting different organizations and communities. Linking social capital connects individuals or organizations across various interest groups (Galindo et al., 2017; Halpern, 2005). Bridging, bonding, and linking are key to social capital and to social justice. To impact social justice, school principals use social capital along with Fraser's understanding of redistribution to transform financial capital, human capital, and intellectual capital into cultural interventions that can address inequity (Tsang, 2009).

School principals' use of cultural interventions will leverage the practices and traditions of the community to make change. Tsang (2009) also noted that school principals use of social capital may provide additional social resources through instructional practices. For example, schools may create a bridge by linking with other schools when sharing effective instructional practices from other schools within its social network. Additionally, a school may bridge and link with other schools when sharing effective teaching practices from other schools within the social network. Also, a school bonds and links when receiving services from NGOs and recruiting teachers through staff social networks. Bonding, bridging, and linking works with the concept of recognition when different racial/ethnic groups protect members' interest and bond to expand access to opportunities (Galindo et al., 2017). On the other hand, the researchers pointed out that bonding, bridging, and linking may have the adverse effect if the group is not recognized due to its minority status. Social capital works with representation as actors strive to minimize loss or maximize gains through assessing and mobilizing socially embedded resources for

purposive actions (Tsang, 2009). In bridging, bonding, and linking, social capital can be an asset that will influence learning when principals advocate and align these resources with a social justice mindset (Jayavant, 2016).

Social Capital Connection to Social Justice Leadership

Social capital is a tool that social justice leaders can use to impact learning outcomes and thereby close equity gaps in education. Leaders who pursue a social justice agenda should engage and adopt an advocacy role (Forde & Torrance, 2017). As social justice leaders, principals must actively dismantle privilege to certain students while promoting change and encouraging reflection (Galindo et al., 2017; Oplatka & Arar, 2015). Principals who view themselves as social justice leaders should remain focused on the dimensions of redistribution, recognition, and representation (Wang, 2016). As such, TPS SJPs should intentionally seek to bond, bridge, and link the school community and stakeholders. In building stronger communities and relationships, students' social capital becomes an educational asset that has the potential for influencing learning. TPS SJPs are not only charged to improve students' achievement to meet the requirements of accountability policies but also have a mandate to serve as change agents to promote social and economic justice for schools (Wang, 2016).

To promote social and economic change in schools, TPS SJPs can connect theory to practice with four elements of social justice leadership. These elements are decreasing achievement gaps, intensifying social justice, incorporating of democratic/ethical values, and engaging critical dialogue and consciousness. The first element is to decrease the achievement gaps for African American students (Oplatka & Arar, 2015). The authors indicated that principals should strive to achieve excellence in education for all children and provide the necessary resources for disadvantaged students. The second element identified by Oplatka &

Arar (2015) is to intensify social justice in the school to create a more equitable environment. For example, principals should construct terms of inclusiveness and just distribution within schools. In doing so, principals will incorporate the dimensions of recognition, redistribution, and representation. The third element is the incorporation of democratic/ethical values. This element calls for the democratic and participatory inclusion of teachers and students in the governance and operation of the school. The fourth element is critical dialogue and consciousness. Dialogue assists marginalized groups to be meaningfully included, and the consciousness is developed through critically thinking for change, creativity, and innovation.

Social Capital Connection to Charter School Competition

TPS SJPs understand that equity in redistribution, recognition, and representation requires the reversal of systematic/institutional injustice (Wang, 2016). As such, the effects of charter competition seem to perpetuate racial and socioeconomic injustices. Studies by Chapman & Donnor, (2015) and Galindo et al. (2017) noted that the history of oppression and discrimination experienced by minority groups poses a potential threat to social capital, as minoritized groups have been barred and excluded from educational opportunities and networks. The proliferation of charter schools impacts social capital in TPS when there is competition for students and resources. Charter schools are often advantaged because of their social networks, which can include economic development groups and sociopolitical groups (Jabbar, 2015). Thus, African American students in TPS may not benefit from the access to networks charter school students benefit from. Consequently, it is the task of the SJP in TPS, as social justice agents, to address changes in TPS that lead to equity and inclusion (Forde & Torrance, 2017; Wang, 2016). Social justice leaders of TPS operating in competitive charter environments can use their position of power to garner social capital to increase the cultural responsiveness and rigor of the

curricula, provide equitable school resources, implement culturally responsive instruction, and employ highly qualified teachers. Therefore, as TPS principals in a competitive charter environment, principals should actively utilize social capital to reduce societal inequalities.

Social Justice Leadership and Principals' Perspectives

In this study, SJL is used to study the TPS principals' perceptions of charter school competition. Principals in this study embraced a strong moral commitment to social justice in the field of education. As the leaders of their TPS, they had immediate experience and intimate knowledge of the school community in addition to having a sound grip on the problems and a better understanding of social justice than others who do not share this commitment (Wang, 2016). Jayavant (2016) argued that social justice begins with the active voice of the school leader. Additionally, Jayavant (2016) posited the need to explore and investigate the characteristics, behaviors, and practices of effective leaders for social justice and equity. Principals must grasp that social capital bonds, bridges, and links groups with shared norms, values, and expectations (Coleman, 1988; Galindo et al., 2017). Therefore, the school leader should leverage social capital to address the needs of the school community her or she serves.

Additionally, principals should acknowledge that minoritized groups have limited access to educational resources from a historical context (Bradley, 2015; Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Galindo et al., 2017). Therefore, the school leader as a change agent must actively dismantle privilege and address equity issues (Forde & Torrance, 2017; Galindo et al., 2017; Oplatka & Arar, 2015). In a charter competition environment, TPS SJPs should address inequity by bringing theory to practice with the four key elements to achieve more equitable and just schools as explained by Oplatka and Arar (2015).

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2   PERCEPTIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO CHARTER SCHOOL COMPETITION

METHODOLOGY

As school districts welcome charter school competition and choice as reform models, it is important to understand how TPS SJPs perceive and respond to them in order to arrive at a better understanding of the daily impacts and challenges of charter competition (Jabbar, 2015). Advocates of charter schools argue that markets with more competition increases efficiency and performance of schools than markets without competition (Hoxby, 2002). However, research using market theory has provided little insight into how principals respond to competitive pressures (Jabbar, 2016) given that pure competition does not exist in education and is rarely addressed in the literature (Linick, 2014). Jabbar (2016) maintained that little consideration is given to social and institutional constraints on a principals' actions under market theory. In other words, the dynamics of race, class, and institutional factors, like school systems, are deeply ingrained aspects of education that TPS principals must navigate. However, market theory does not consider these factors. Overall, charter competition is typically studied through the lens of market theory from district and organizational levels (Davis, 2013; Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011; Holmes et al., 2006; Kamienski, 2011; Maranto et al, 2010) and rarely from the principals' perspectives (Cannata, 2011; Jabbar, 2015).

Principals' perspectives are under-studied in charter competition. Given that the principal is a mediator for improving student achievement (Davis, 2013; Holmes et al., 2006; Kamienski, 2011) and can enable access to social mobility (Brown, 2006; Jayavant, 2016), this study focuses on social justice leadership (SJL) and TPS SJPs' responses to charter competition. SJPs' seeks high academic achievement and affirms students from all backgrounds while fighting and

altering institutionalized inequities, discrimination, and injustices that benefit few students and harm more students (Turhan, 2010). Merriam (2009) noted that the theoretical framework not only provides a disciplinary orientation, but also helps to determine what to observe, questions to ask, and documents to collect. Therefore, SJL was the theoretical framework that grounded my study and determined how I collected and analyzed data. The purpose of my study is to examine TPS SJPs' perspectives of charter school competition. The following three research questions guide my study:

1. What are the perceptions of traditional public school social justice principals about the proliferation of charter schools?

2. How do traditional public school social justice principals respond to charter school competition?

3. How do traditional public school social justice principals' responses to charter school competition impact their work in addressing educational inequities?

Contextualizing Charter Schools

This study was conducted in a school district in the state of Georgia. Over the last few decades, charter schools have gained popularity in Georgia. I will first look at how charter laws have evolved with state policy in Georgia. Then, I will discuss how charter schools have proliferated in the Woodland School District (WSD)[1] and the impact of charter policy on the school district.

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[1] Woodland School District and all other names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Charter Schools in Georgia

In Georgia, 20 percent of students are enrolled in charter schools. Thirty-two percent of charter students are African Americans, while 45 percent of charter school students are White (Stirgus, 2016). In 1994, Georgia's charter school law only allowed for the creation of conversion charter schools, defined as a TPS that converted to a charter school. The first three conversion charter schools in the state opened in 1995 (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE], 2014). Conversion charter schools were created to gain additional flexibility in exchange for greater accountability and entered an agreement with state mandated authorizers. The second type of charter schools, start-up charter schools, are schools that did not exist before becoming a charter school. A 1998 law allowed the creation of start-up charter schools and the first start-up charter school opened in 2000. These start-up charter schools were grouped by state mandated authorizers as locally approved charter schools or state-chartered special schools (GaDOE, 2014).

Currently, there are 115 charter schools in Georgia: 97 start-up charter schools and 18 conversion charter schools. In Georgia, charter schools must follow the same open admission and enrollment standards as TPS. The state allows charter schools to establish enrollment preferences so long as they are legal. Therefore, charter schools are not allowed to deny admission if there is space available for the student in the school (GaDOE, 2009). Unusual circumstances enable the enrollment of siblings, employees' children, and charter schools' governing board members' children. Charter schools, like public schools, are subjected to the same state accountability assessments. Through their charter contract, charter schools are held accountable for academic results and may have additional stipulations for certain academic performance goals (GaDOE, 2014).

Woodland School District

Woodland School District (WSD) is a large school district in Georgia. In recent years, the school district experienced significant changes in its organizational structure and culture. Previously, schools were aligned by area and supervised by an area superintendent. Now, schools are aligned by cluster and supervised by associate superintendents. Matters of operation remain with the central office. However, parents, community members, and educators can influence the direction of a school via election to the school's governing board. The principal remains the final decision maker on the governing board within the charter district. Lastly, the district has approved a considerable number of charter schools that now operate in most of the clusters in WSD. The number of charter schools operating in the clusters typically range from one to five in all but two of the seven clusters.

Research Design

To answer the research questions, I used a case study design to focus on WSD's TPS SJPs. WSD is a competitive charter environment with approximately 12 percent of its schools operating as independent charters. In addition, WSD became a charter system that is granted flexibility from state mandates (GA DOE, 2009). However, WSD remains under the authority of the local school board and functions like a TPS district (GA DOE, 2009). WSD was best suited for this study, not only because of the high percentage of charter schools within it, but also because the charter schools have significant demographic (racial and social class) differences, and socioeconomic and sociopolitical challenges. For example, Belair Charter school students are predominantly African American (78%) and economically advantaged (approximately 30% poverty rate) whereas Westwood Charter school is a predominantly White (approximately 60%) and economically advantaged student group (about 10% of students live in poverty). Both

schools, less than a mile away from each other, are in a community that has experienced drastic economic and political change over the past decade from gentrification. This type of environment seemed best suited to study TPS SJPs perceptions of and responses to charter competition.

Previous studies (Cannata, 2011; Davis, 2013; Holmes et al., 2006; Lubienski, 2003; Lubienski & Gulosino, 2011) have noted the relationship between density of charter schools and principals' responses to charter competition. Therefore, principals are more likely to respond to charter competition when a charter school is in close proximity. Presumably, given the density of charter schools in WSD and the likelihood that the principals feel market pressures or perception of competition (Jabbar, 2016), WSD provided an ideal context to study TPS SJPs' responses to charter school competition.

I decided to conduct a qualitative case study. Qualitative research collects, analyzes, and presents informative data (i.e., beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations that underlie behaviors) that is sometimes not conveyed in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). In selecting a qualitative research design, I decided to use a bounded case study instead of phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, or narrative analysis. Phenomenology was not a fit because this study did not aim to depict or describe the essence of the phenomena, nor did the researcher aim to have direct experience with the phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Ethnography was not a fit for this study because the focus was not about culture, and I did not immerse myself in the site as a participant observer (Merriam, 2009). Although this study assumed an inductive stance and hoped to gain meaning from data, grounded theory did not fit because the research questions did not align with building a theory or addressing questions about processes (Merriam, 2009). Lastly, narrative analysis did not fit the type of data that was collected for this study, as narrative

analysis uses various methodological approaches to examine story constructs, linguistic tools, and cultural context (Merriam, 2009).

A case study was the best fit for this study best because its focus was on four specific clusters in WSD that have charter schools. Merriam (2009) noted that a phenomenon must be intrinsically bounded to be a case study. Therefore, the selected clusters were chosen given that it was likely that competition existed because of the geographic proximity of charter schools, principal characteristics (Jabbar, 2015) and the number of participants who considered themselves social justice leaders. In accordance with Kamienski's (2011) qualification for competition, this study focused on clusters that had the following charter characteristics: (1) publicly funded and do not charge tuition; (2) do not enforce any selection criteria for entry; (3) hold lotteries in the case of over-enrollment; and (4) abide by public school regulations including accountability testing. This study used selected clusters in WSD with a concentration of charter schools (Maranto et al., 2010). The focus on the clusters was primarily to provide insight on the principals' response to charter competition (Merriam, 2009) as the clusters provide a boundary and proximity for charter schools to compete with public schools. The rationale for this choice was that in the clusters with a higher concentration of charter schools, public school principals may feel more threatened by the proximity of charter schools and the possibility that charter schools may divert students from them, thus creating an environment for competition.

Because bounded case studies can be combined with other forms of qualitative studies, I combined a bounded case study with critical inquiry due to the context of power and inequality (i.e., race and social class) evident in the charter school reform movement (Barr et al., 2006; Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Frankenberg & Lee, 2003; Urrieta, 2006). Therefore, in taking a critical research stance, this study focused on multiple principals'

perspectives that allowed for well-reasoned analysis and understanding of the TPS SJPs'

perceptions of and responses to charter competition. This study focused not only on providing a

description of principals' perceptions of and responses to competition but also took a critical

view by exploring and critiquing whose interest the charter school reform movement serves, who

benefits from charter competition, and the outcomes of charter competition. By providing a

descriptive case study, the phenomena of charter school proliferation were illuminated, and

readers of this study may use the information to challenge their own thinking and apply the

information to similar situations (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I focused on the TPS principals in

the clusters who consider themselves social justice leaders as the unit of analysis for this inquiry

(Merriam, 2009).

Sampling

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) noted that to gain insight and understanding of a phenome-

non, qualitative research should use a purposeful sampling strategy. Therefore, this study utilized

purposive sampling, which established criteria for units of analysis (Merriam, 2009). To access

SJL in the clusters of WSD, all participants had to meet a specific profile. Therefore, I developed

a list of attributes for identifying participants. The participants were selected based on three

criteria. First, the participant had to be a principal in the selected clusters of WSD. The principal

was chosen from clusters that have operating charter schools because the proximity of the charter

school creates the condition for competition. Second, the principal had to consider himself or

herself a social justice leader. Given that the focus of this study was on social justice leaders, all

principal participants identified with the tenets of social justice leadership (Oplatka and Arar,

2015). Third, the principal must have led the school for at least one year. The assumption was

that the principal would know his or her community after a year of leading the school. Principals

were screened for participation via a demographic questionnaire, which was administered to principals in the clusters with charters schools. Through the demographic questionnaire (See Appendix A), seven participants were selected from the four clusters to gain insight into the TPS SJPs' response to competitive pressures from charter schools. By selecting the seven participants from four of the seven clusters, this study was able to consider a cross section of the school district.

Data Sources

The data used to evaluate the research questions was documents, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. I conducted a document analysis to help prepare for the interview questions. Once the document analysis was completed, all the individual interviews were conducted, followed by the focus group interviews.

Document Analysis

First, I conducted a document analysis by collecting and examining each participant's demographic information, CCRPI scores, and the school's climate ratings, website, social media sites, and flyers/brochures/pamphlets. Merriam (2009) noted that this form of data is only relevant if it provides insight on the research question and can be easily and readily acquired. Looking at the aforementioned documents provided insight into how social justice principals responded to competition. Therefore, I reviewed how the principals used the information to conduct public relations and/or use as a competitive tool to persuade parents to enroll their children.

Individual Interviews

Second, I conducted individual interviews to engage the participants in conversations about the research questions. Given the small participant size, an interview was best suited for

my case study (Merriam, 2009). Questions asked during the interview were structured to require

open-ended answers, providing insight into the respondents' views on competition from charter

schools. Merriam (2009) recommends that the questions be mostly open-ended because it

allowed for the exploration of principals' perceptions of and responses to charter competition

and asked the participants to expound on any given answer for more insight (See Appendix B for

the interview protocol).

Focus Group

Third, a focus group interview added another dimension to my study because the

participants were able to share opinions, beliefs, and attitudes that may not come up in individual

interviews (Merriam, 2009). I selected four of the participants to participate in a focus group.

Because there are no firm rules of how many to include in a focus group (Merriam, 2009), I

chose four participants to manage the conversation of the focus group more efficiently. The

focus group participants were selected based on availability. In both individual and focus group

interviews, the questions were interpretive, allowing the participants to make meaning of the

questions from their lived experiences to gain details and descriptive data (Merriam, 2009) (See

Appendix C for the focus group protocol).

Data Collection Procedures

To make sense of the data for a case study, data management is critical (Merriam, 2009).

First, prior to collecting information, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board of

Georgia State University and WSD. Second, after receiving approval from both review boards, I

emailed the consent form and the demographic questionnaires to all the TPS principals in WSD

clusters with charter schools. I gave the principals 14 days to complete the demographic survey

and sent a reminder on the fifth, seventh and thirteenth days. Third, for the selection of the

participants, I purposefully selected the principals from the returned demographic survey based on the three criteria discussed in the sampling strategy. Fourth, once the participants were selected, I requested documents or pulled documents from the WSD database and conducted a document analysis for the seven selected participants. The analysis of the documents occurred prior to both the person-to-person and focus group interviews and helped guide the questioning during the interviews. Fifth, I scheduled the individual interviews. The individual interviews were scheduled via email. The individual interviews were conducted using two audio recorders (one as a back-up) and interview questions. For the individual interview, I used Zoom, a video communication tool, to meet with the participants. Each participant received a Zoom invitation with a link and unique passcode for the private virtual interview. The interview was recorded using the record feature in Zoom. After the completion of each interview, I wrote down my immediate reflections (analytic memo) as this provided insight and helped with monitoring the process of collecting the data (Merriam, 2009). In other words, I simultaneously collected data and looked for possible themes that I coded later in the process. Lastly, I scheduled the focus group interview via a Doodle form. Participants were given five possible time slots to generate a consensus on the meeting schedule. Participants were given a Zoom invitation with link and unique passcode for the focus group interview. As in the individual interview process, I wrote down my immediate reflections (analytic memo) after the focus group interview.

Data Analysis

For this portion of my research, an intensive analysis constructed themes or categories that demonstrated patterns across the data (Merriam, 2009). The data analysis for this study occurred in two phases. Firstly, I discuss the process of first cycle coding and types of codes that were utilized in this cycle of the study. Secondly, I discuss second cycle coding for this study.

Lastly, I will conclude with an explanation of how I moved my codes from first cycle to second cycle in my analysis.

First Cycle Coding

The research questions for my study, aligning with the theoretical framework, guided my selection of coding methods (Saldaña, 2016). For the first cycle of coding, I concurrently used deductive and inductive codes. Some researchers believe that you enhance the accountability, depth, and breadth of the finding when more than one coding method is employed (Saldaña, 2016). For deductive codes, I referred to my theoretical framework and research questions to keep my coding decisions focused on the premise of the study. I created a list of codes aligned with the framework of the study (Saldaña, 2016). These codes were created from the literature that discussed social justice, social capital, and social justice leadership. Some examples of the codes included but are not limited to the following: trust, community, social capital, social cohesion, relationship, cooperation, and competition. The deductive coding process applied to the document analysis. For inductive codes, I decided to use a combination of descriptive coding and In-vivo coding. Descriptive coding summarizes in a word or noun the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data, while In-vivo coding uses action codes drawn from the participants' own language (Saldaña, 2016). Selecting both descriptive coding and In-vivo coding allowed for a richer perspective since descriptive coding alone does not provide insightful perspectives from the participants (Saldaña, 2016). For descriptive coding, the researcher identifies similarly coded passages in the transcript, then reassembles the passages in an organized and categorized narrative for further analysis (Saldaña, 2016). For In-vivo coding, I captured repeated words, phases, and variations that were important to the participant to crystallize meaning from the principals' perspectives. Descriptive coding kept the focus of my study in line with the

theoretical framework while In-vivo coding kept the focus of my study on gaining insight from the principal's perspective. The inductive coding process applied to the individual interviews and the focus group interview.

Second Cycle Coding

For second cycle coding, I reorganized and reanalyzed codes from the first cycle methods using pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). According to Saldaña (2016), pattern codes are inferential codes that identify emergent themes. A review of the first cycle codes enables the researcher to look for commonality and assign pattern codes. Therefore, I took all the codes from document analysis, individual interviews, and focus group interview to identify patterns to pull out themes. Eventually, the pattern codes allowed for the development of statements that describe theoretical constructs associated with social justice leadership (Saldaña, 2016). Overall, the reorganization and re-analyzation helped crystallize the themes.

Process of Coding

The process of coding the collected data began with the document analysis. The collected documents reflect the interests and perspectives of the participants' school (Saldaña, 2016). For the collected documents, I used the codes listed for deductive codes in first cycle coding. Next, the individual and group interviews were transcribed and then coded based on the codes developed from the theoretical framework of the study (Saldaña, 2016). Subsequently, I used descriptive and In-vivo coding. For descriptive coding, I identified similarly coded passages in the transcript, then reassembled the passages in an organized and categorized narrative for further analysis (Saldaña, 2016). For In-vivo coding, I captured repeated words, phases, and variations that were important to the participant to crystallize meaning from the principal's perspective. While coding, I utilized analytic memos to document my thinking about the data

(Saldaña, 2016). Analytic memos are like journal or blog entries about the participants or phenomenon under investigation (Saldaña, 2016). In addition to coding the interview transcripts and documents, I also coded my analytic memos using descriptive coding and In-vivo coding. I used NVivo software for coding during this study.

After completing first cycle coding and analytic memos, I read the data within each code to ensure that they were in alignment with the given code. Afterwards, I mapped the codes and created a code chart. For the mapping of the codes, I went through an iterative process that translates/transforms/changes the full set of codes from the interviews, focus groups, and documents to a reorganized list of categories and truncated them into themes (Saldaña, 2016). These themes aligned with concepts from social justice leadership. For example, if the following descriptive and In-vivo codes appeared, (parent-center, "lack of parent support," calendar, "cultural events," and community meetings) then the coding schema was the following: I listed the codes, then categorized related codes under relationship (parent-center, calendar, and "lack of parent support") and community ("cultural events" and community meetings), and then recategorized both under the theme "bridging." For the code chart, I summarized and compared the participants to scan and construct patterns from the codes (Saldaña, 2016). The code mapping and charting helped with the transition into second cycle coding. In second cycle coding, I looked for emergent themes based on the commonality and patterns observed from the code maps and charts.

The final process was the interpretation of the data. I gathered the most salient quotes from the interviews, focus groups, and documents along with the three themes that stood out in the study (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, I created a text chart that outlined my findings and their connections to the theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2016). I also took the most relevant and

salient portions from my analytic memos while interpreting the data. This text chart and the portions from my analytic memo supported my findings (Saldaña, 2016).

Positionality

For this study, it is important to address positionality to achieve trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam, 2009). As an assistant principal in a TPS and someone who works in a district like WSD, I am aware of the impact that charter school competition has on a TPS. I believe that charter schools are not the silver bullet to solving inequity in education. I believe that educational disruptors, like social justice principals, are needed to address societal, economic, and cultural oppressions. I view charter schools as having an unfair competitive advantage and believe that the autonomy afforded to charter schools should be the same for TPS in a competitive charter environment. Therefore, I would like to know more about how principals navigate competitive charter environments while addressing inequity issues in education.

Ethical Consideration

This study assumed good intent. The study considered the privacy and confidentiality of the school district and participants and I have taken several steps to ensure both were maintained throughout the study. First, approval from Georgia State University (GSU) and WSD school district was obtained through the IRB process prior to conducting this study. Next, once approved by both GSU and WSD school district, the potential participants received a questionnaire that included an informed consent form that explained the purpose and nature of the research. This form gave potential participants the option to opt-out of the research. Potential participants were informed that the interviews were anonymous, and aliases are used in the study. Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, all information obtained from the participants will be destroyed. To protect the school district and schools from harm, pseudonyms are used to

disguise the names. Lastly, all electronic data collected will be stored on a password-protected

USB drive, and physical data will be locked away in a file cabinet (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a way of verifying that the finding of a study matches reality

(Merriam, 2009). To ensure that this study included all the information observed, I used

triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity (Merriam, 2009). First, triangulation is a method

to check and establish validity in qualitative research by analyzing a research question from

multiple perspectives to achieve consistency across data sources (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). By

using multiple data sources, I was able to triangulate by comparing and cross-checking the data

from the participants' interviews, the focus group, and the collected documents. This study does

not purport reliability because replicating the same results for this study falsely assumes that

human behavior is static (Merriam, 2009). However, this study does assume consistency, the

ability to replicate with other studies, based on the triangulated sources (Merriam, 20009).

Second, to address bias, I used reflexivity, an iterative process that makes the researcher

transparent to the research process and at the same time considers the impact of the research

process on the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The reflexivity process for this study

included journaling that recognizes and acknowledges my role as the researcher and my

positionality. I journaled about my thoughts and reactions to the interviews and focus group. The

reflexivity process helped to establish trustworthiness for this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Lastly, the research process of this study established transferability. Transferability is when the

research process can be used in another similar context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The

transferability of the purposeful sampling, the rich description of the setting and participants, and

the details provided in the context, background, data, and findings established trustworthiness
(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, this study focused on one school
district. Therefore, the focus on one school district presented constraints on the selection of
social justice leader for the study population (e.g., diversity). Second, the location of where the
study is conducted, and the history of racial segregation in the South presented a strong regional
limitation. The entrenched racial issues in the South may have magnified the results of the study.
Third, the lack of previous research that focuses on social justice leadership in a charter
competition environment limited the context for this study. Lastly, the perspective of the
researcher on charter proliferation may have limited the research study.

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Results

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This section presents an overview of each principal's strengths and challenges in their
schools, the responses to the research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of traditional public
school social justice principals about the proliferation of charter schools? 2) How do traditional
public school social justice principals respond to charter school competition? 3) How do
traditional public school social justice principals' responses to charter school competition impact
their work in addressing educational inequities? The presentation of findings begins with an
overview of each principal's strengths and challenges in their schools. It then presents the
principals' perceptions of charter schools and the three ways the principals responded to charter
schools: to collaborate, to compete, and to change perception. While aspects of the SJ principals'
responses to charter schools' competition differed, the SJ principals shared three common
responses to charter schools: 1) seeking to be intentional in the response to charter competition,

2) providing opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice for their constituents, and 3)

providing support and access for their students. Lastly, I provide a synopsis of the findings.

Strengths and Challenges

This section provides an overview of each school's strengths and challenges and presents

the demographic information of each school (see Table 1). The table describes each school's

performance rating (CCRPI), climate rating, school size and demographics such as the

percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch from 2017 to 2019. It is noted that, as

schools increase in their performance rating, they also increase in their climate rating. Also, the

strengths and challenges of each school are wide-ranging. Several SJ principals noted that their

schools' strengths were in the curriculum and graduations rate, whereas others noted that their

schools' strengths were in the culture and climate of the school. In addition, the challenges for

these principals focused on specific subgroups within the schools or an overarching need of the

school.

Table 1

School Demographic Information

School Data	CCRPI (3-year trend)[1]	Climate Rating (3-year trend)[2]	% Economically Disadvantaged	Demographic Information (%)	School Size	% SWD[3]	% ELL[4]
Parkway ES	2017 –53.5 2018 – 55	2017 – 3 2018 – 2	100%	Asian - 0 Black – 94.2 Hispanic – 5.3 Multi-Racial – 0.2	448	15.8	4.5

	2019 –51.6	2019 - 3		Native American- 0 White- 0.2			
Garden MS	2017 –58.2 2018 –64.4 2019 -70.7	2017 – 1 2018 – 3 2019 - 3	100%	Asian – 0.3 Black – 89.0 Hispanic – 7.5 Multi-Racial – 0 Native American-0.1 White- 2.3	915	23.3	4.6
Edison MS	2017 –76.6 2018 –82.8 2019 –85.2	2017 – 3 2018 - 4 2019 – 4	29.5%	Asian - 3 Black – 30.9 Hispanic – 25.4 Multi-Racial – 3.8 Native American-0.8 White- 36.1	1733	13.3	13.3
Central ES	2017 –57.6 2018 - 64.5 2019 -61.2	2017 – 2 2018 – 3 2019 - 3	100%	Asian - 0 Black – 65.9 Hispanic –30.8 Multi-Racial – 1.3 Native American-0.3 White- 1.6	305	17.4	25.9
Northwe stern ES	2017 –56.3 2018 –64.4 2019 - 43.7	2017 – 3 2018 – 2 2019 - 1	100%	Asian - 0 Black – 95.9 Hispanic – 3.0 Multi-Racial – 0.9 Native American-0 White- 0	532	15	1.7
Carol ES	2017 –79.7	2017 – 3	100%	Asian - 0 Black – 96.8	283	14.8	0.7

	2018 -78.9 2019 –65.6	2018 – 4 2019 – 3		Hispanic – 1.8 Multi-Racial –1.4 Native American-0 White- 0			
Norland HS	2017 –75.6 2018 –67.4 2019 –78.7	2017 – 4 2018 – 4 2019 – 4	100%	Asian - 0 Black – 78.4 Hispanic – 6.0 Multi-Racial – 2.8 Native American-0 White- 11.9	1403	15.2	2.0

Note: [1]College Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) Data provided for 2017 to 2019. Each school receives a score on a scale from 0 to 100. The CCRPI score is based on five components: Content Mastery, Progress, Closing Gaps, Readiness, and Graduation Rate. [2]Climate rating range from 1–5-star rating, with five stars representing an excellent school climate, and one star representing a school climate most in need of improvement. [3] Percent of Students with Disabilities. [4] Percent of Students who are English Language Learners.

Principal Bent

With three charter schools in the same zone and less than a mile from two charter schools, Principal Bent is in his fourth year as the principal of Norland High School. As a social justice leader, Principal Bent aims to do the right thing for his students and educators in the building. He noted the importance of honesty, transparency, and authenticity. He provides an opportunity for students and the school community to flex their social activism and academic growth. For example, Principal Bent recalled the student movement around gun violence. He noted, "supporting and providing the opportunity for students to do walkouts to post signs and observing some of the pushback from some members of the community who didn't agree with that… I made a point to connect a lot of IB [International Baccalaureate] learner profile traits and being an IB school to student activism." As he noted, "it is incumbent on us to prepare our students to act when they don't agree with something in society and to do so in a responsible way that may move the needle and make change." Additionally, Principal Bent is committed to seeing

academic growth in his school. He lauds his school's excellent job in implementing the

International Baccalaureate Program, stating, "we've done an excellent job of implementing a

variety of different programs from International Baccalaureate... and we are fully authorized with

three different programs, diploma, career, and middle years." In addition, his school has over

fifteen advanced placement courses for students. Principal Bent noted that students "like to come

to Norland High and Norland High is a space where, for the most part, kids are thriving in a

variety of diverse ways." Exposure is key to Principal Bent, who has been focused on pathway

opportunities for his students to excel in arts and academics. Principal Bent added that the

challenge for his school is students' completion of the International Baccalaureate Program. As

he noted, "Norland High shows growth… [and] I'm really proud of growth. Nevertheless, there

are areas in student groups and student populations that performance-wise can continue at a

better rate in terms of the measurable metrics like end of course tests, ACT or SAT, AP

performance, and IB completion for the diploma."

Principal Black

Less than a mile from the closest charter school, Principal Black is five years into her

principalship at Edison Middle. As a social justice leader, Principal Black works to dismantle

academic segregation in the gifted and advanced classes. Principal Black noted that "student

achievement and student capacity grows through access to rigorous curriculum taught by

effective teachers." Principal Black is proud that Edison Middle is a no minority-majority school,

which means that not a single ethnic, racial, or religious group is a majority. As she stated, "our

school is divided rather evenly; a third White, a third black, and a third Hispanic. We have

students from all over the world. That is an incredible strength that goes hand in hand with our

other strength, which is being an International Baccalaureate school." Principal Black added that

the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) program promotes and supports the rigor of student-centered experiences related to the real world and interconnectedness between all the learning. Principal Black considers the framework and philosophy of IB as "a huge strength because it allows us to make sure that they're receiving not just the academic education, but the real-world things that they need to be successful." In addition to the IB program, Principal Black noted that the "soft skills and social-emotional types of skills… are just as important for student success as academic or informational knowledge." The initiatives that she put forth are usually well supported. Principal Black stated that "we have a very involved community… my community and my parents are engaged and supportive of our initiatives and our programming." On the other hand, Principal Black faces challenges addressing the needs of the English Language Learners. The percentage of English Language Learners at Edison is significant given the population of the school. Out of the 1700 students at Edison Middle, 13% are English Language Learners. Principal Black noted, "the challenge for us to get our students past that over that hump and really into learning academic language and the advanced skills of the English language for reading, writing, and speaking." Another challenge for Principal Black's school is closing the performance gap between special education students and general population students. Principal Black noted, "our special education students show significant improvement during the three years, but they still lag behind their non-disabled peers."

Principal Stanley

Carol Elementary is less than two miles away from two charter schools. Principal Stanley, a ten-year principal of the school, noted that her school is an actual community school. She proudly noted that "I do this work for the community. I was born and raised in this

community. This is a community school and so everything that I do is for the community."
Principal Stanley noted that her school community is socioeconomically diverse. As she
explained, "we serve children who live in poverty, and we serve children who come from homes
of affluence and middle-class and everything in between." At Carol Elementary, 68% of the
children are economically disadvantaged. Principal Stanley recognizes that every student comes
to her at a unique starting point and her job is to create global thinking citizens of this world. As
she noted, "I have kindergarteners who come in and can read chapter books… and I have
kindergarten that do not know their name… but teachers are expected to grow each child and
something different for everybody." Principal Stanley raves about the positive staff and student
culture that impacts the growth of students. Principal Stanley noted, "we have a positive staff and
student culture… our ability to support the growth of our learners… continuously being above
the district and state average." On the other hand, the challenges that Principal Stanley faces are
primarily financial. Money is needed to buy resources to improve student growth. Principal
Stanley noted that "the money to fund the work and the resources that are needed to make the
growth for every student happen" is not enough through the budgeted funds from the district.
Additionally, Principal Stanley identifies teacher capacity as a challenge. Principal Stanley notes,
"staff willingness to grow and push themselves… to impact student growth… can sometimes be
uncomfortable." Therefore, Principal Stanley recognizes that while building staff capacity is a
challenge, her staff remains positive because the goal is student growth.

Principal Hill

Northwestern Elementary has three charter schools in the same zone and one less than a
mile away. Principal Hill is in her sixth year as the principal of Northwestern Elementary and
beams with pride that her students come ready to learn each day. Principal Hill contextualized

that her students come ready to learn and have the second-highest poverty rate in the SWD

school district. Principal Hill noted that "[her] students have a wide variety of needs… and they

come not just focusing from an academic standpoint… we are also helping from an emotional

standpoint, as well as making sure that all their basic needs are covered." To Principal Hill,

providing wrap-around services to students and families is a strength of her school. Despite these

services, the performance rating of Northwestern Elementary remained significantly low over the

last three years, ranging from 43.7 to 64.4 to 43.7. Principal Hill attributes the low performance

rating of her school to losing many of her top-performing students to the charter school. Principal

Hill noted the importance of having researched-based solutions to address instruction. Principal

Hill ensures that everyone is treated with respect and dignity and leads with a servant's heart as a

social justice leader. As she noted, "I feel as though if you cannot serve, therefore you cannot

lead."

Principal Lawrence

Principal Lawrence is in his fifth year as principal of Parkway Elementary, less than a

mile away from the closest charter school and is zoned with four charter schools. As principal, he

strives to balance what he feels the students and community need versus the high stakes testing

environment. However, as the school's leader, he finds humility, perseverance, and intelligence

essential to leading the school successfully. As he noted, "it is important to me as a leader to be

smart enough to figure things out." I must provide opportunities for students to "analyze the

neighborhood and look for needs that can be filled." Additionally, Principal Lawrence takes

pride in his school's academic program and small class sizes. As Principal Lawrence noted, "our

academic program has grown it to be a strength… and [the school's] small group instruction and

class size that average about 16 to 17 students" is a strength of Parkway Elementary. In addition

to the academic program and small class sizes, Principal Lawrence emphasized his school's focus on personal care with a variety of wrap-around services like a food pantry, medical and dental care, therapy, to name a few. Although Principal Lawrence provides multiple services, his school is challenged with transiency. Principal Lawrence noted, "that many of his students are a transient population that consistently withdraw or enroll throughout the school year." Notably, the upper grades students tend to leave for charter schools that are nearby. Principal Lawrence's justification is that parents choose to leave because they are dissatisfied with the feeder middle school. So, when a student finally gets selected into the charter school or a younger sibling is selected into the charter school, parents tend to go fully with the charter option.

Principal Stone

Principal Stone is in his sixth year as principal of Central Elementary, which is zoned with four charter schools. Principal Stone considers himself to be fair, firm, and consistent. As he notes, "I feel like everything that I do in terms of leadership and trying to welcome adults or students… is fairly consistent… and I feel like people want to come to work because we've created a great environment." Principal Stone noted that people need to feel valued and respected. Therefore, his goal is to replicate a family environment for his school community. For example, Principal Stone noted that he creates a "sense of connection, so people feel valued and respected… when [he] walk around every morning, greet all [his] staff members assess how they are." Principal Stone created a culture where everyone feels respected; their voice is important, heard, and valued. Additionally, at 29.5 %, Central Elementary has a significant population of English Language Learners compared to other schools. Principal Stones notes that his school is now 55% Black, 20% Hispanic, 10% White, and 9% multi-racial compared to 2019 data that shows the school at 65% Black, 30.8% Hispanic, 1.6% White, and 1.3% multi-racial. He sees the

changing landscape around gentrification and the shift in diversity as a challenge. As he stated, "Central Elementary is diversifying by socio-economic status… and I am constantly navigating in a way that makes each group feels supported, heard, valued, and respected." Principal Stone's challenge in breaking the communication barriers for his increasing Hispanic population. Additionally, he is challenged with ensuring that he is able to provide the support for his changing demographic.

Principal Hudson

Principal Hudson is in his ninth year as principal of Garden Middle, which has four charter schools in the zone and one two blocks away. Principal Hudson noted, "what drives me as a principal is that I don't see the principalship as a job or a career… it is a calling." Principal Hudson's decisions are driven by how it impacts instruction and students' safety. As Principal Hudson noted, "when I look at decision-making, I always think about it as perspective of how it impacts instruction and how does it impact student achievement." As a social justice leader, Principal Hudson makes sure that all students have access to quality education. As he noted, "I make sure that all students are treated fairly… as the school community goes through regentrification, and our school becomes diverse… and parents make a decision to come to the traditional public school." Thus, Principal Hudson wants parents to know that their children will have the same opportunity no matter their socio-economic status. In addition to ensuring opportunity for all, Principal Hudson recalled the struggle to change perceptions of Garden Middle. When he began his tenure at Garden Middle, he looked inwards to the staff and students to build their self-confidence, seeing this as the school's strength. As he recalled, "the biggest difficulty in my leadership in the past nine years was the perception of what people thought of our school." He explained that "the perception of our school as not being a great school... was

based off of information that was 20 years ago." Whereas student achievement has increased drastically under his leadership, he wants to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities. Twenty-three percent of Garden MS student population receives special education services, which is significantly higher compared to other schools. In his estimation, Principal Hudson noted that the disproportional high number of special education students in Garden MS is due to the charters school not accepting their fair share of special need students. Even with such a high special needs population, Principal Hudson intends to provide each student with what they need to be ready for high school, college, and professional careers. He is intentional about closing those gaps and giving students what they need to be ready for high school and ready for career and college. This includes changing the schedule for all sixth grade classes to include a reading period for all students, assigning the most experienced teachers to teach special and inclusion classes, and implementing researched based teaching strategies and tools.

Perceptions of Charter Schools

In response to research question one, the SJ principals shared similar perceptions of charter schools. Of the seven SJ principals, six believe that charter schools fulfill a need in the community. However, the SJ principals find it troubling how the systems of charter schools are utilized in communities. As Principal Lawrence shared, charter schools "have their place, but largely they have been misused in many cities to gentrify and segregate areas." In recognizing that charter schools are here to stay, the SJ principals noted that the structures provided to charter schools put them at a competitive advantage. Therefore, they feel it is unfair to compare them to Traditional Public School (TPS) as charter schools follow different rules. Overall, the SJ principals' perception of charter schools' advantage is centered around the overall flexibility of charter schools. Moreover, SJ principals also noted that charter schools often lack diversity.

Flexibility

The first way that principals perceive charter schools is that the charter schools have more flexibility with funds and student enrollment than TPS. The principals noted that this flexibility provides charter schools an unfair advantage. The principals argue that the key to their funding flexibility is the ability to pull resources from multiple funding sources. Principal Lawrence noted that "a change in funding policy in the school district advantaged charters schools, who receive state money and large grant money." He noted that TPS typically does not qualify for these large grants because of restrictions from the district on school-level partnerships. On the district level, principals wanting to connect with potential partners must fill out numerous forms ensuring that the partnership aligns with the schools' strategic priorities. At the same time, potential partners require mandatory approval at the school and district level. On the other hand, charter schools can receive funding from both the public and private sectors without the red tape. Also, the principals suggested that charters have fewer restrictions on how they may use funds. Principal Stone noted that "budget restrictions on how funds are allocated and used prevent TPS from having the flexibility to address the needs of the school." Principal Stanley expressed the same sentiment, stating, "we have to work with [district mandates] that don't necessarily always work with what our vision and the way we want to accomplish the work. Sometimes those things get in our way. Different roadblocks that come up along the way of working towards the goal of student achievement and student growth." Therefore, charter schools are better equipped to address the needs of students given charter schools greater access to funding and ability to spend it according to their students' needs. Not only do charter schools have flexibility with funding, but flexibility with enrollment.

Charter schools also benefit from being able to operate with low enrollment. Principal Stone expressed disbelief that "charter schools are allowed to remain open with low enrollment but would have been forced to close if they were TPS." Because of this flexibility, Principal Hill noted that charters schools are "an opportunity for some neighborhoods to create free private schools where they can be selective." As students choose to leave the TPS for charter schools, they cause low enrollment in TPS which then results in the SWD school district closing the TPS for low enrollment. As Principal Hill explains, "the low enrollment is because the students have elected to go to the charter schools." These students would otherwise enroll in the school if the charter school option were not available.

A notable point to charter schools' flexibility is their enrollment process. Charter schools can cast a wide net to attract students, which is troubling to several principals. Principal Hudson shared that charter schools "pull the cream of the crop students from our local school and have priority attendance areas or priority attendance zone they can pull from… to expand the catchment area for those parents who do not want… to go to the local school because of whatever reason." Therefore, charter school's priority attendance zones allow charter schools to pull students from multiple clusters for enrollment while TPS are only allowed to enroll students within the cluster. The flexibility in enrollment areas provides advantages to charter schools.

Whereas TPS is not selective of students, charter schools can pull the top-performing students. Principal Hudson added, "charter schools choose kids that come into their building, unlike TPS." This selective process for enrollment creates a specific type of clientele for charter schools that may be homogeneous by race and socio-economic status. Principal Stone noted, "some charter schools look very homogeneous in terms of their clientele…. and a lot of times [charter schools] pull the cream of the crop from our local school… and then it impacts the local

school performance." Therefore, charter schools do not face the same academic challenges as the

TPS, which do not have the ability to cherry-pick students. TPS must accept students whether

they are disabled, gifted, or have behavior problems. Principal Lawrence noted, "students that

matriculate through charter school typically do not have the most significant challenges… and

charter schools can provide better test results." Given the flexibility in enrollment, the principals

pointed out that many charter schools lack diversity, limiting how students learn to tolerate and

respect others in our society.

Lack of Diversity

The principals shared their thoughts on the lack of racial and socio-economic diversity at

charter schools. The principals noted that an unintended outcome of charter schools was to

perpetuate segregated schools. Principal Lawrence explained the extent of the racial makeup of

charter schools. He stated,

> I have a charter school, a quarter of a mile or two blocks away… they are 60%
> Caucasian. And I don't even have one Caucasian student. So, there's no way you're a
> school that said we're representative of the community.... So, I think that creates a
> falsehood.

Similarly, Principal Hudson noted, the students in nearby charter schools are very homogeneous.

The lack of diversity in charter schools may be counterproductive to establishing equitable

environments, which some principals suggest is backed by major corporations. As Principal

Lawrence stated, "people are swayed by multi-million-dollar corporations who want to continue

this segregation and the lack of diversity." Principal Lawrence noted that the largest builder in

the area has a community across from his school. However, on the website of the builder, there is

no mention of his school. Principal Lawrence shared, "Parkway Elementary is not an option… it

is like we don't exist. You click on a tab that says schools, and it says, the charter elementary and

middle school." Not only are charter school's clientele typically skewed heavily to a specific race, but charter schools typically are also homogeneous in the socio-economic class.

Another aspect of charter schools' lack of diversity is the socio-economic status of the charter families. Principal Stanley explains how charter schools impact diversity in socio-economic status. She shared, "the thing that people don't realize is that we all have the secret sauce as we all learn from each other... so, my children who live in section eight houses and apartments can sit next to children who live in these nice, manicured lawns around the corner from the school and learn from each other. It's a better experience for everyone… and charter schools kind of take that away from children." Expressing a similar sentiment, Principal Stone stated the importance of "not just diversity of race, but a diversity of financial or socio-economic status. Because we lose many of our families who would help build a more social and equitable environment. But because we don't have that diversity of experience, we lose them. It's quite common." These TPS experience a loss of families that may create diversity in socio-economic status is compounded over time. While the SJ principals believed charter schools have unfair advantages, the ways that SJ principals perceived and responded to competition with charter schools varied.

Perception and/or Need to Compete

In response to research question two, the SJ principals responded to charter schools in one of three ways. First, some SJ principals sought to collaborate and partner with the charter schools on various initiatives to benefit the school community. Second, some principals sought to compete with charter schools by strategically identifying their competitive advantage and using their competitive edge to attract students and families. Third, some principals sought to change perceptions about their own schools to attract more students. These SJ principals use a

variety of public relations and marketing tools to reframe the school's image strategically. Figure 1shows how the principals approached charter school in their communities. Three of the seven SJ principals stated that they felt the need to compete with charters schools. In comparison, two of the seven principals saw collaborative opportunities with charter schools and two principals responded to charter school competition by seeking to change perceptions about their schools.

Figure 1

Three types of Social Justice Principals
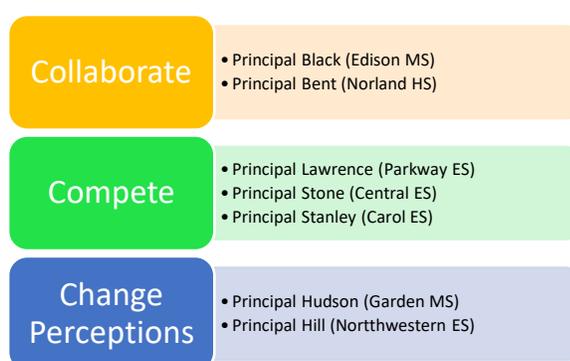
Regardless of how each SJ principal responds to charter schools, three tenets of social justice leadership practice are highlighted in their response. First, SJ principals expressed intentionality in how they addressed bias within their school community, perceptions of their schools within the community, and partnerships with charter. Second, SJ principals recognized that dialogue and equity of voice was essential for change and worked to create structure and systems that facilitated both dialogue and equity of voice. Lastly, SJ principals provided support and access to address the needs of the school community they serve. SJ principals built the foundation of various academic and behavioral services within their schools and address bias. Figure 2 shows that despite their different responses to charter schools, all SJ Principals exhibited these three aspects of Social Justice Leadership.

Figure 2

Tenets of SJ Principals' Leadership
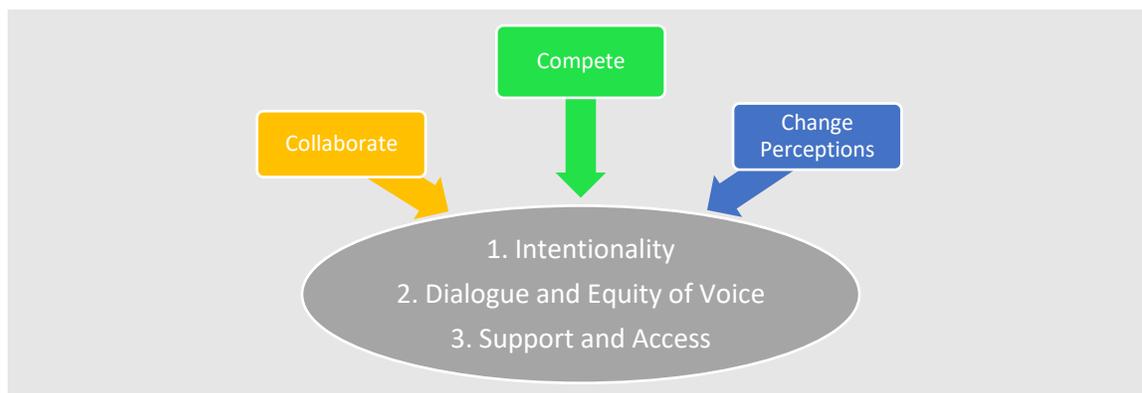
Collaborating with Charter Schools

In being intentional, some SJ principals collaborated with charter schools as a strategic move. They view charters as thought partners to better their schools. The collaborative approach of these principals expanded their social networks and provided more opportunities for their students. As Principal Black explained, "I've had conversations with [charter school leaders] if there's an idea that they have, or they'd like to consult with me… I believe that at the end of the day, competition is for the athletic fields, but not really for the schools. We should all work together to make our schools the best they can be." Principal Black further qualified the purpose of why leaders in the charter environment should collaborate. Principal Black stated,

> Any great leader is going to look at what other schools are doing... and especially if they're successful, maybe look to replicate parts of that success. So, I am aware of the charter schools that service the students that would or could come here. And I want to be able to look at them and say, this is a great idea. We offer this as well. Or this is just not something we offer, but I think it behooves me to be familiar with that.

Principals that collaborated were intentional about their advocacy to dismantle inequities in their schools. In reflecting and assessing their schools, principals identified implicit and

explicit bias in their school systems and structures. Principal Black noted that her advanced

classes were primarily White students and not representative of the school's demographic.

Principal Black explained,

> I dismantled the process for which we assigned students' classes. We aligned it so that our classes reflect the overall student body regardless of the student's level. I also dismantled the practice of assigning the best and most experienced teachers to only the advanced content classes. We reorganized staff so that there were no teachers that just taught advanced content or just taught special education classes so that all students had access to all teachers. In doing so, raised the expectations of every teacher to be able to deliver high-quality instruction to either the most struggling student or the most advanced student. And that was something that I expected of every teacher in the building.

Key to Principal Black's decision to dismantle the placement process for advanced

content classes is the belief that all students should be exposed to high-level content and

instruction. This decision, although not from Principal's Black collaboration with charter

schools, is an explicit tenet of social justice leadership that calls for leaders to dismantle systems

and rebuilt equitable systems (Forde & Torrance, 2017; Galindo et al., 2017; Oplatka & Arar,

2015). Similarly, Principal Bent expressed the same sentiment as Principal Black with content

and instruction. He changed the requirement for students to take advanced placement classes. He

noted that "exposure to the tests and the participation in the [AP] tests… over time... seen a great

growth in the number of kids who take advanced placement tests." Although their decisions on

content and instructions is not a direct collaboration with charter schools, both SJ principals

utilized this as a strategic move to position their schools to address inequity. In addition to this

intentionality, SJ principals who sought to collaborate with charter schools also encouraged

dialogue and equity of voice.

When providing equity of voice, SJ principals who collaborated with charter schools

allowed for dialogue and representation. These SJ principals established structures to make sure

that every voice is valued. Principal Bent recalled "a group of students who wanted to start a

Black student union at the school… and not feeling like all the classes weren't representative of the school population." Principal Bent listened to the concerns of the students. Furthermore, Principal Bent revised the school's strategy to allow programs to reflect the racial-ethnic makeup of the school. Principal Bent expressed joy in the fact that students took the initiative to lead and address inequity. Then there is Principal Black. She noted that only a select set of parents were active with the school. Therefore, her first strategy was to "have multiple voices at the table, as her school made decisions… so that teachers had voice, parents had voice, and students had a voice." She was purposefully in identifying and selecting parents that were Black and Hispanic for PTA roles, the school governance team, and extra-curricular events that warranted parent involvement. Like intentionality, equity of voice was not a direct collaboration with charter schools. However, both SJ principals believe that creating systems for equity of voice was a strategic move to address inequity. While SJ principals that collaborate value and encourage advocacy and representation, they also link with charter schools to gain access to social networks.

The collaborative SJ principals connects to the social network of charter schools to gain access to resources. The collaborative SJ principals recognized that collaboration with charter schools give access to the charter schools' networks. Principal Bent noted that partnership of his school with the nearby charter school helped establish a college fair. Principal Bent noted the importance of collaboration. He stated, "sometimes those charter schools can also bring in resources to allow some of that stuff to happen. And we can kind of latch onto it as well." Over the years, this collaborative strategy, which began with the prior principal, paid dividends in drawing parents to send their kids to the school. Collaborative SJ principals may bridge programs and activities with charters schools. Principal Black stated, "with extracurricular

activities, like our PTA sports and academic clubs, our students get to engaged with charter school students… and the charter school brings additional revenue when they use our field." Whereas collaborative SJ principals are intentional, provide equity of voice, and opportunities to access by capitalizing from charter schools' social network, SJ principals that compete with charter school also are intentional and seek to provide equity of voice and access to opportunities and resources.

Competing with Charter Schools

SJ principals that compete are intentional about the needs of the school they serve. They identify the gaps and act. To compete with local charter schools, Principal Lawrence noted that he "keeps [his school's] class sizes down to an average of about 16 to 17" and that it is "intentionally designed" to be that way to attract parents and compete with charter schools. In addition, he noted that his school is a trauma-informed school that addresses social-emotional learning and provides lots of wraparound services. Principal Lawrence stated that "having a public relations campaign is one of the strategies [he] employ to respond… focusing on additional resources and wraparound … services dental, medical, therapy, and counseling." He believes that the wraparound services provided are an advantage over charter schools as charter schools traditionally do not offer those services.

Whereas Principal Lawrence was intentional about class size, Principal Stanley was intentional about looking at biases. Principal Stanley tasked her teachers to look at their language towards "the culture of poverty" as teachers would use language like "those parents don't care." In reflecting on their practice, Principal Stanley noted that "teachers recognized everybody's doing the best they can…... and the teachers' language change in my building." While competitive SJ principals intentionally employ methods to compete with charters such as keeping

class size small and addressing biases, they also establish structured systems for dialogue and equity.

In competing with charter schools, SJ principals are inclusive when assessing the school community's needs to ensure equity of voice. Principal Stanley noted the importance of having a "trusting and open dialogue" in communicating the school community's needs. For example, having a considerable number of Spanish-speaking families, Principal Stone aims to support all families in "making sure that everyone's voice is respected and that no one population is overbearing or forcing their ways or their thought into how we operate the school." He noted that he would like all families to "feel that the [school] is approachable and that it can have conversations about things that may be uncomfortable sometimes." Knowing that language can be a barrier, Principal Stone established the school's dual-language immersion (DLI) program. Principal Stone stated that the DLI program "creates equity of voice because there's something else that comes up, or something happens, or I'm on the spot. I can't get world languages. I have enough staff in the building who I can call upon, you know, to kind of support." The DLI program has been a significant accomplishment for Principal Stone as not only the number of staff who speak Spanish increased, but the staff reflects the kids and the community." When people are supportive and have a voice, it can be a tremendous public relations tool for principals. However, when people do not have a voice, it is incumbent on the SJ principal to fill that gap and ensure equity of voice. Along with ensuring equity of voice, SJ principals that compete go beyond the academic needs to provide access to wrap-around services for students and families.

SJ principals who compete, provide support and access by making parents partners and supporting families beyond the school doors. An SJ principal that makes parents partners is

Principal Stanley. Principal Stanley noted, "the increase in the charter competition was the unforeseen challenge itself…and for the first, probably two to three years of this happening, [the previous principal] watched her enrollment decline and felt like there was nothing she could do about it." Principal Stanley recalled,

> Charter schools were just taking my fifth graders. And my initial response was to find the best fifth-grade teachers that I could possibly find. But once they started the high school and the primary school, and [the charter school] became a K through 12…. it became something I could not fight.

> Although Principal Stanley had significant social capital, she could not stop the exit of students from her school to the charter school. Additionally, in implementing a parent as partner model, Principal Stanley stated,

> The academic parent-teacher team encouraged all the parents to come into the classroom three times a year and look at their children's data compared to the other children's data in the class… and the teachers give them some strategies and materials that they should do with the children every night to cause that specific data to grow. And they come back three times a year to monitor that data.

> Even with the parent as a partner, Principal Stanley struggled to keep her enrollment up. Principal Stanley recalled that parents would apologize for leaving but felt they had no choice. Subsequently, Principal Stanley employed an innovative marketing strategy. Principal Stanley stated that she took the attitude of marketing, outreach, and improving how [she] does marketing in the last three or four years. In noting the demographic change due to gentrification, Principal Stanley decided to make brochures and set them out when the school is used as a voting poll. Using the slogan "Choose [Carol] Elementary," Principal Stanley utilized social media and yard

signs all over the neighborhood. The key to a marketing strategy is to ensure that the school produces quality, not just bells and whistles. Principal Stanley emphasizes the need for brochures to match the data, and that teachers are working to grow children. Along with employing a public relation strategy, the SJ principals that compete provide work to provide access and resources for their students.

The principals who compete with charter schools work hard to ensure access and resources as well. Principal Stone who described himself as a competitor, ensured access to his Spanish-speaking families when language became a barrier. Principal Stone stated that "in areas around communication, with a school population that is a third Hispanic, language can be a barrier at times." To overcome this, Principal Stone always sent home communications in English and Spanish. Additionally, he meetings and conferences, using district support, would have a translator. Principal Stone's solution to break down the communication barrier was implementing the Dual Language Immersion program. He saw this as an opportunity to support student achievement and increase enrollment for his school. SJ principals, who compete, are intentional, provide equity of voice, and provide access to resources within and outside the school. Similarly, SJ principals who work on changing perceptions about their school exhibit the same aspects to change the outlook on their school as a viable alternative to charter schools.

Change Perceptions about TPS

A SJ principal that works to change perceptions is intentional about addressing biases and inequities. Principal Hudson was intentional in his approach to changing the perception of his school. From his nine years serving as principal of Garden MS Principal Hudson stated:

> During seven of the nine years, I was constantly dealing with the perception that our
>
> school is not great. And a lot of that perception was based on information that was 20

years ago. A lot of that was based on our students who were predominantly black. Therefore, our community was going through regentrification. So, the perception was that because students were from a particular part of the community, the school was inferior to those charter schools around us. So, we spent much time as staff making sure the community was aware…. and we spent a lot of time working on student achievement and improving ourselves as a team so that our student growth was shown based on our work.

Principal Hudson's first action was to close off his school. His decision may seem contradictory to the role of a SJ principal. However, Principal Hudson identifies the need to "close off the community talk and … work within [the] school first" to build confidence in the students and the teachers. Principal Hudson noted that "whoever came into the building, [he] always asks what's [their] purpose?" In clarifying the reason for controlling access to the school, he noted, "some people were looking for things that kids would normally do, [and] turn it into a whole other story as a negative." Therefore, Principal Hudson controlled the controllable by focusing on the things within his control. He first addressed the adults in the building to "change their mindset and the way they spoke about the school." The next thing that he did was implement systems and procedures for the whole school around instructions. For example, he implemented Thinking Maps, a school-wide program to address students' organization of their thinking and writing to improve literacy. Lastly, Principal Hudson said he deliberately connected "with community members who really believe in all children." The cumulative actions of Principal Hudson affirmed the students and staff and provided shelter from the inferior beliefs of some in the community. In being intentional about addressing bias, SJ principals that changing perception ensure equity of voice.

The SJ principals that worked to change perceptions also took an active role in ensuring equity of voice. These actions include speaking up for the people who are not in the room. In meeting with a group of parents, Principal Hudson recalled that they wanted to create a school within a school to keep the advanced students together in a separate cohort. He noted that he rejected the idea of the school within a school and indicated that children from "a background of disadvantage or from a background of privilege…. will get the same opportunity" at his school. Not only did Principal Hudson make sure that parents were aware that he was not going to create a school within a school, but he also took the time to educate parents as to why their thinking was wrong. Principal Hudson shared that "parents seeing the work of the staff, seeing the results that our staff was getting with all children, breaking down the data to show that all subgroups in our building were growing, showing that if your child was receiving gifted or special ed, that our teachers were providing those services too" which allowed the parent to change their mind about the school. Principal Hudson aim to change the perception of the school is not motivated by the presence of a charter school. From day one of his principalship with Garden Middle School, Principal Hudson aimed to have students and faculty be proud of their school. Principal Hudson believed that the change in attitudes within the school will in turn allow other outside to have a changed perception of the school. SJ principals also work to address the school community's need, which leads to providing access and support.

SJ principals that change perception are strategic in their partnership in providing access and support to the school community. The perception of inferiority or lack of quality is not just because of the demographic of the student body, but the belief that the TPS lacks resources. Principal Hill stated that "one of the things that [her school] really works on…. are partnerships… to help close the divide." The partnerships are often with smaller organizations.

For instance, Principal Hill talks about her partnership with the church that volunteers to work with students on phonics and provides students with snack packs on the weekends. The SJ principals noted that the partnership might not be with influential organizations, but they are helping to close those gaps based on the school's needs. Principal Hill noted that her way of combating the lack of resources is to offer a wide variety of specialized classes. Her students can take band, dance, music, art, and Spanish, and PE. She stated that you should "give the kids an option so they can have a well-rounded education…. our motto is to give them a world-class education." Once SJ principals have decided on building the resource capacity of the schools, the task is to engage parents to change the perception of their schools. Principal Hill noted that "one of the things [she] did…. is trying to make sure that we keep parents and students engaged… so, they want to stay even when a slot opens up at the charter school." In addressing perceptions, these SJ principals were explicit about providing support and access through partnerships with stakeholders and community members.

Summary of Findings

SJ principals' perception of charter schools centered on the belief that charter schools are advantaged because of their flexibility and ability to be selective in their student enrollment thereby creating homogeneous student enrollment. Irrespective of how SJ principals responded to the presence of charter schools, they exhibited intentionality, provided opportunity for dialogue and equity of voice for the constituents, and provided support and access for their students. Some SJ principals expressed intentionality by strategically partnering with charters schools. Other SJ principals intentionally addressed bias perceptions. Next, SJ principals recognized that opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice was essential to impacting the schools they serve. Some SJ principals encouraged equity of voice by creating structures for

input and dialogue. Other SJ principals utilized public relations strategies to mobilize the voices of parents. Lastly, SJ principals look to address the needs of families beyond the school doors by providing support and access to tangible and intangible resources. Some SJ principals built the foundation of various academic and behavioral services within their schools and address bias. While some SJ principals go beyond the academic needs to provide wrap-around services for students and families.

Discussion

The discussion section includes a summary of the findings, connection to previous literature, implications, and concluding thoughts. First, I present a summary of the findings of SJ principals' perceptions of and responses to charter schools and charter competition. Second, I assess the findings with previous literature on SJ leadership and charter competition. Third, I consider the implications for leaders and policymakers to address achievement gaps and inequity in education. Lastly, I present my final thoughts on the findings concerning equity gaps in education.

Review of Findings

SJ principals view charter schools as having the freedom to be flexible and lacking diversity. SJ principals perceive charters schools to have greater flexibility with funds and student enrollment. SJ principals consider the flexibility an unfair advantage for charter schools. Therefore, the conditions provided for charter schools put them at a competitive advantage, making it unfair to compare charter schools to TPS. Moreover, charter schools often create segregated schools that lack race and socioeconomic diversity. This lack of diversity creates a form of segregated schools stratified by both race and class that impacts TPS, which are often left with low achieving and social-emotionally challenging student populations. As such, the SJ

principals noted a wide range of needs for student groups or specific subgroups and the overarching needs of the school. Charter schools influence SJ principals in addressing the need of their schools.

SJ Principals response to charter competition falls into three different categories for this study. The SJ principals responded to charter competition by either collaborating with charters, competing against charters, or seeking to change perceptions of their TPSs. In responding to charter competition, all the SJ principals expressed intentionality, provided opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice, and provided support and access to resources for their students and families. When SJ principals collaborated with charter schools, they were intentional in their strategic partnership with charter schools. They provided opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice in the form of advocacy and representation. They provided support and access by connecting their schools to the social networks of charter schools. When SJ principals competed with charter schools, they were intentional about assessing the needs of the school and acting. They provided opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice with an inclusive assessment of the needs of the school community. Lastly, these competitors provided support and access through wrap-around services for students and families. When an SJ principal worked to change perceptions of the school, they intentionally addressed bias and acts as related not only to the school, but also in comparison to charter schools. They spoke up when there was a lack of dialogue and equity of voice, and were resourceful in providing support and access from wide-ranging partnerships.

Connection to the Literature on Charter Schools and Social Justice Leadership

In describing TPS SJ principals' perceptions and responses to charter competition, I also critically examined how SJ principals perceived charter schools and the effects of charter competition. SJ principals experience a wide range of challenges. As SJ principals noted, these challenges include curriculum, graduation rates, culture/climate, and resources centered on specific subgroups within the schools or an overarching need of the school. The findings are connected to previous studies that addressed charter schools' proliferation (Almond, 2012; Angrist et al., 2012; Arsen & Ni, 2012; Barr et al., 2006; Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Brown, 2006; Chapman and Donnor, 2015; Corcoran & Stoddard, 2011; Gulosino & Lubienski, 2011) and studies that addressed social justice leadership (Galindo et al., 2017; Oplatka & Arar, 2015; Wang, 2016).

Key to SJ principals' perception of charter schools' advantage is the flexibility that is afforded to charter schools. Frankenberg et al. (2011) noted that charter schools enjoy a significant amount of autonomy because of favorable state laws. With this autonomy, charter schools can provide smaller and more intimate environments for at-risk students (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006). However, the findings from this study noted that SJ principals perceive charter schools as not supporting at-risk students. This is evident in charter school enrollment patterns as they target students in ways that will primarily ensure the students' high performance and thereby ensuring the charters schools' survival (Jabbar, 2016; Linick & Lubienski, 2013). The SJ principals noted that charter schools could cherry-pick students and pull the cream of the crop students from multiple attendance zones. This puts the charter school at a competitive advantage when parents compare the performance of TPS to the charter schools. In contrast, TPS must accept all students regardless of their disability or behavior issues.

The fact that TPS must accept all students who apply, regardless of their disability or behavior issues, runs opposite to the premise of market theory. Parents do not freely select the charter schools because the charter schools have a choice to accept or reject based on a lottery and/or capacity. Additionally, Shin et al., (2017) noted that parents might look at other factors than superior academic performance. Some principals note these other factors in this study. For example, Principal Lawrence used the additional resources and wraparound services in his school to market to parents as he competes with the area charter school. As market theory purports, the competitive markets are supposed to create freedom of choice and consumer mobility (Davis, 2013; Kamienski, 2011; Linick, 2014). However, freedom of choice and mobility may not truly exist because parents not selected by the charter school or did not win a lottery for entrance into the charter school must revert to the TPS. The ability to be selective is a flexibility that is not afforded to TPS and thereby putting TPS at a disadvantage. Therefore, the concept of open markets does not operate the same in the educational arena and may unintentionally impact school environments.

The proliferation of charter schools may be producing segregated school environments under the auspice of choice. As the principals in this study pointed out, charter schools create environments that lack diversity of race and socioeconomics. Whereas charter advocates championed the concept of the charter reform model as a solution to address inequity in education, the issue of segregated school environments continues with the proliferation of segregated charter schools (Chapman and Donnor, 2015). This study adds to studies that show segregation is counterproductive to closing the achievement gap between African American students and White students. For example, it is noted that African American students scored significantly lower on achievement tests in segregated schools (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Studies

(Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Frankenburg & Lee, 2003; Frankenburg, 2011) found that most charter schools are more segregated than TPS. In their study, Frankenberg & Lee (2003) found that 70 percent of all African American charter school students, compared with 34 percent of African American traditional public-school students, attended segregated minority schools.

The segregation of students by race and class became pronounced within charter schools. Charter schools' enrollment comprised of 28 percent African American students, compared to 15 percent African American students for TPS (Chabrier, 2016). Bifulco and Ladd (2007) found that African American students were more likely to move to charter schools where 70 percent of the students are African American while White students were more likely to move to charter schools where more than 80 percent of the students are non-Black. Thus, charter schools have been viewed as a new form of segregation (Chapman & Donnor, 2015). Given that segregated schools are problematic, it would be incumbent on SJ principals to address segregated schools impacted by charter school competition.

The impact of charter competition challenges SJ principals to improve conditions for student achievement and the school community they serve. The literature on Social Justice Leadership (SJL) posits that SJ principals should pursue a social justice agenda that engages and adopts an advocacy role (Forde & Torrance, 2017; Jayavant, 2016). Each principal in this study engaged and advocated for their school in numerous ways when faced with charter school competition. This study adds to the literature on social justice leadership and TPS principals' perception of charter competition. Whether SJ competes, collaborates, or changes perceptions, the SJ principals shared common aspects of their leadership that include being intentional, providing opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice, and providing support and access.

Oplatka & Arar (2015) noted that SJ principals intentionally seek to bond, bridge, and link the school community and stakeholders to build stronger communities and relationships whereby students' social capital influence learning. This is true for Principal Black and Principal Bent. Both principals were intentional in strategically collaborating with the charter as a way to build their social network. As Jabbar (2016) noted, charter schools have extensive social networks. Both principals intentionally linked their schools to charter schools to provide access to social, political and economic groups they may otherwise not have access to. In addition to expanding their social capital, some SJ principals intentionally addressed cultural misrecognition. For example, Principal Hudson worked to eliminate the biased perception of his school as inferior to charter schools. As he noted, some in the community perceived the school negatively because the school was predominantly African American and socio-economically disadvantaged. Therefore, Principal Hudson did what Fraser (2000) and Wang (2016) posited for recognizing maligned groups by revaluing the disrespected identities of the students and positively appraising the students' community. In being intentional, SJ principals must also create conditions for dialogue and equity of voice.

In providing opportunities for dialogue and equity of voice, SJ principals provided structured systems that allow for representation and advocacy. Along with being an advocate, SJ principals worked to ensure representation for equity of voice. Therefore, as Oplatka & Arar (2015) noted, equity of voice should include all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents) in critical dialogue for the governance and operation of the school. The SJ principals in this study noted that ensuring equity of voice can be a tremendous public relations tool that addresses equity gaps and changes perceptions. Principal Stone leveraged the use of representation, by ensuring that his Hispanic population have a voice, to break down communication and resource

barriers. His Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program engaged his Spanish-speaking parents and provided opportunities for his English Language Learners to learn in their native language. The engagement of the parents and the dual language learning provided an opportunity to dialogue and be meaningfully included for impactful change (Oplatka & Arar, 2015). In creating conditions for dialogue and equity of voice, SJ principals provided support and access.

In providing support and access for their students and the school community, SJ principals were tasked with knowing what limits their community access to support and resources (Bradley, 2015; Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Galindo et al., 2017). This is a critical component for addressing and closing achievement gaps. Oplatka & Arar (2015) noted that principals should create a more equitable environment and construct inclusiveness and just distribution within schools. For example, both Principal Bent and Principal Black dismantled the structures of classes and teachers to ensure that Black and brown students have access to advanced classes and the best teachers. Principal Black and Principal Bent restructured the program and course selection criteria for inclusivity. In addition, they allowed opportunities for student and parent groups to advocate to engage in the changes they want to see. Both SJ principals' actions aligned with Fraser's (2000) belief that social justice requires both redistribution and recognition to address socioeconomic restriction. Principal Bent and Principal Black were intentional about dismantling the class structures and instruction to allow greater access to black and brown students. Additionally, Principal Stone established a dual language system with the school for Hispanic students and families to have greater access. Another aspect for SJ principals to provide support and access was having intimate knowledge of the school community and a good understanding of the problems facing the school (Wang, 2016). Principal Stanley used her parents as partners program to close the achievement gap by empowering

parents to learn about their children's performance data. Whereas Principal Stanley provided

support for parents, Principal Hill provided access to additional resources like afterschool

programs from partnerships with small community organizations. Thus, the access and support

provided was tangible and intangible.

Implications for Policymakers and School Leaders

Although there is widespread support for free public education in the United States, the

political implication from dissatisfaction continues to permeate our school systems (Kirst and

Wirt, 2009). This dissatisfaction is the driving force of advocacy groups for school choice

initiatives like charter schools. As Smith & Larimer (2013) noted, the advocacy groups for

charter schools employ considerable influence on educational policies. With a shift in

demographics in the United States, it is incumbent on policymakers and school leaders to address

diversity and the implementation of policies (Kirts & Wirt, 2009). Therefore, adaptation and

evaluation of charters schools' unfair advantage and the impact on school demographics is

essential to addressing the inequity in the United States educational systems. Policymakers and

school leaders may use this study as a way to adapt and evaluate the impact of charter policies.

Policymakers

This study adds to the literature that SJ principals perceive charter schools as lacking

diversity that impacts the quality and experience of TPS students. Charter schools' students'

selectivity creates homogeneous school identities by both race and socioeconomics (Haber,

2021), generating a new form of segregated schools for both charter schools and TPS. The TPS

is often left with low achieving and most challenged student populations and leaving the schools

and districts with excessive special education expenses that the charter schools do not have to

encumber (Toner, 2017). Given that charter schools are more segregated than traditional public

schools (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Frankenburg, 2011; Frankenburg & Lee, 2003) and studies note that African Americans perform significantly lower on achievement tests in segregated schools (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015), policymakers should take a critical look at charter policies. There should be a critical look at the bias, beliefs, and interest groups associated with developing charter school policies (Cooper et al., 2004; Leonhardt, 2017). For example, the SJ principals noted that the flexibility afforded to charter schools gives them an unfair advantage. Therefore, the adoption of charter policies must also be closely analyzed as this advantage is a problem for the SJ principals in this study (Malen, 2006). Malen (2006) noted the importance of identifying all the important actors in the education arena for not just the policy adoption but also the policy implementation that may be diluted or derailed when all actors are not considered. Additionally, institutions involved in crafting charter policy are not free from presumptions, prejudice, and preferences that directly impact charter adaptation (Malen, 2006). Next, in understanding the mechanisms by which charter competition influences principals' leadership (Jabbar & Li, 2016), policymakers should consider closing the achievement gaps for students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged groups. Therefore, future studies may look at how the achievement gap is impacted by homogeneous environments created from charter school policies and the impact on students with disabilities and students who are economically disadvantaged.

School Leaders

With no studies on how TPS SJ principals perceive and respond to charter competition, the findings from this study provide a foundation for future studies. Although this study did not determine if SJ principals closed the achievement gaps when faced with charter schools' competition, this study's findings provide important aspects for SJ principals' leadership to consider when promoting social and economic justice for schools when faced with charter

competition (Wang, 2016). The key aspects are intentionality, providing opportunities for

dialogue and equity of voice, and providing support and access. Therefore, leaders of TPS

schools should be able to utilize these key aspects to drive change that addresses inequity in

education systems affected by charter competition. In utilizing these key aspects, school leaders

will need to leverage social capital to effectuate change in their schools (Galindo et al., 2017;

Tsang, 2009). This means that school leaders will bond, bridge, and link forces of various

networks that will allow them to gain connections, partnerships, and resources. With establishing

connections with various networks, Smylie & Evans (2006) emphasized that this connection

must be strong enough to support change and reinforces the reform that schools' leaders want to

see. Future studies may look at the impact of the SJ Leadership tenets on student achievement.

These tenets include intentionally, equity of voice, and access and support. Also, future studies

may broaden the definition of inequity in education as this study only used student achievement.

Some SJ principals in this study signified the importance of addressing their student's social-

emotional wellbeing and the community's needs in addition to addressing academic needs.

Conclusions

My curiosity about how principals navigate charter competition while addressing inequity

issues in education led to identifying aspects of SJ principal leadership in a competitive charter

environment. Oplatka and Arar (2015) discussed bringing social justice theory to practice

addressing inequity. This study provides a basis for future studies that could examine SJ

principals' perspectives to close achievement gaps in competition with charter schools. As the

achievement gap remains an ongoing issue in the United States (Madyun, 2011; Raskin et al.,

2015), charter schools may not be the answer to closing that gap. The findings in this study

indicate that charter schools, with flexibility and lack of diversity, create environments that

perpetuate segregation by race and social class. The policymakers should evaluate charter policies and ensure dialogue and equity of voice in the adaptation of charter policies.

Based on what is known currently about charter policies, I propose two ideas for charter policy adoption; as Bifulco & Ladd (2006) noted, proponents of charter schools champion the belief that charter schools provide alternative educational environments and programs for at-risk students because of smaller and more intimate environments. Therefore, I suggest that policymakers provide guidelines that require charter schools to accept a proportional amount of low achieving students and students with disabilities. My other suggestion is that policymaker's level the playing field and allow TPS to operate with the same flexibility as charter schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Background Questionnaire

*Only some respondents will be invited to enroll into the study if he or she meets the eligibility requirements.
**Response from anyone not selected for the study will be deleted.

Part I

Name: _____ Age: _____

Race: _____ Gender: _____

School: _____ Cluster: _____

1. How long have you been the leader at your school?

2. Are you aware of charter school(s) operating near your school or in your cluster?

Part II

Pease check yes or no for the following

	Yes	No
1. I work to decrease the achievement gap.		
2. I intensify social justice in my school: I advocate for inclusion, I allow for every student to access resources, and I acknowledge the claims of historically marginalized groups.		
3. I incorporate democratic/ethical values: I enable students and teachers to have their voices heard.		
4. I engage with Critical Dialogue and Consciousness: I engage in dialogical practices to provide a bridge that brings together communities with differences to overcome powerful barriers. Additionally, I self-reflect to assess my educational values, philosophies, processes, structures, as well as identify my prejudice and assumptions.		

APPENDICES

Appendix B

Interview Protocol and Questions

Script prior to interview:

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to examine how social justice principals of traditional public school perceive and respond to charter competition. Given that segregated schools are problematic and charters schools are on the rise, little is known on about TPS principals' closing equity gaps for racial and economically disadvantage groups in competitive charter environments.

Our interview today will last approximately one hour during which I will be asking you about your thoughts on charter schools, how you respond to charter competition, and how your values and belief in social justice impacts your decisions.

[review aspects of consent form] you were Email a consent form and you completed the consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time.

Interview Questions:

1. What are your thoughts on charter schools?

2. Do you feel competitive pressure from charter school and how do you respond to the competition?

3. Tell me about the strategies you employ to respond charter school(s).

4. To what extent does your school do the following.

   a) Makes curricular or instructional changes to compete for students

   b) Uses outreach or advertisements to compete for students

   c) Compete for resources (i.e., quality teachers).

5. What do you consider the biggest difficulty in school leadership? Explain if this difficulty is impacted by the competitive pressure from charter school(s).

6. What are the values that inform your leadership?

7. Please tell me of a story about how you were able to make social justice connections in your principal practice.

8. What social justice decisions did you make?

9. What areas of progress were you able to make in moving your school in an equitable position?

10. What strategies did you develop as a principal to combat any resistance you experienced to your social justice agendas?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol and Questions

Script prior to Focus Group:

I would like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the focus group aspect of my study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to examine how social justice principals of traditional public school perceive and respond to charter competition. Given that segregated schools are problematic and charters schools are on the rise, little is known on about TPS principals' closing equity gaps for racial and economically disadvantage groups in competitive charter environments.

Our focus group today will last approximately one hour during which I will be asking you about your thoughts on charter schools, how you respond to charter competition, and how your values and belief in social justice impacts your decisions.

[review aspects of consent form] you were Email a consent form and you completed the consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the focus, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time.

Focus Questions:

1. What are some difficulties and challenges with school leadership?

2. Describe what a social justice agenda entail.

3. How do we move schools into a more equitable position?

4. Social justice agendas may experience resistance, what strategies should principals use to combat resistance of such agendas?

5. How would you describe the impact of charter schools on traditional public schools? How would you describe the impact on your social justice agenda?

6. Some of you may view charter schools as competitors, tell us about strategies that your employ to respond to charter school.

7. To what extent does your school do the following.

a) Makes curricular or instructional changes to compete for students.

b) Uses outreach or advertisements to compete for students.

c) Compete for resources (i.e., quality teachers).